An evaluation of secondary education in Niger with particular reference to English language teaching.

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AN EVALUATION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN NIGER WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

An Evaluation of Secondary Education in Niger
With Particular Reference to ELT

by A Z GOUMANDAKOYE

The present study concerns itself with a critical analysis of formal education in the Niger Republic from independence to the present, and the extent to which the experience gained in English Language Teaching could be beneficial for the rest of the curriculum, to the enhancement of the whole system. Hence, this piece of work should not only reveal achievements but also pinpoint the major setbacks of the educational system; more importantly, it should suggest ways and means which could lead to a better improvement of the current system through a contrastive analysis of the major components i.e French, Mathematics, Science, Humanities and English which is felt to be a dynamic and successful subject.

Besides the introduction which focusses on such important points as the problem under study, the purpose, the significance, the limitation, the methodology, and the structure of the study, the thesis comprises six chapters. While chapter two analyses the historical background of the Nigérien educational system, the subsequent chapter scrutinizes the development of English Language Teaching in Niger and contrasts it with other components of the aforementioned curriculum. Chapter four lays the emphasis on the fieldwork organization and execution which derive from the procedures and methods encapsulated by triangulation research. Thus, some English lessons were observed, an important number of students, Ministry officials, school principals and parents interviewed or invited to fill in questionnaires. Chapter five deals with data analysis and interpretation while the last chapter attempts to develop suggestions which in the short, mid or long terms, could bring about positive change within the system. Thus the latter chapter advocates, as in the case in E.L.T., that innovative changes of any component of the curriculum be centered on bottom-up approaches, that teacher development should take into account action-research with the teacher at the centre of all education activities and that any syllabus be student oriented. These suggestions will help ease the major academic problems the education system is facing.

Dedication

To All the Children of my

Beloved Forefathers' Land

Niger

For Their Better Education

and Welfare, We Must Succeed;

To Them, I dedicate the Present

Work.

A Z Goumandakoye

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May the Lord expand His felicity upon all those who endeavour to share their knowledge with others. May He enable me to serve my country, Niger, to the best of my ability (Amen).

List of Abbreviations

A.P.C.V.	American Peace Corps Volunteer.
A.P.P	Activités Pratiques et Productives.
B.A.L.T.	British Association for Language Teaching.
B.A.P	Bureau d'Appui Pédagogique.
B.E.P.C	Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle.
C.E.G	Collège d'Enseignement Général.
C.E.P.E	Certificat d'Etudes Primaires Elémentaires.
C.E.1	Cours Elémentaire Première Année.
C.E.2	Cours Elémentaire Deuxième Année.
C.F.E.P.D	Certificat de Fin d'Etudes du Premier Degré.
C.I.	Cours d'Initiation.
C.I.L.T.	Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research.
C.M.1/ C.M.2	Cours Moyen Première Année/ Cours Moyen Deuxième Année.
C.N.I.P.T	Centre Nationale d'Instruction des Postes et Télécommunications.
C.P.	Cours Préparatoire.
C.R.E.D.I.F.	Centre de Recherche et d'Etude pour la Diffusion du Français.
D.C.P.E.S II	Diplôme de Conseiller Pédagogique de l'Enseignement Secondaire, Tous Cycles (C.E.Gs & Lycées).
E.A.M.A.C	Ecole Africaine de la Météorologie et de l'Aviation Civile.
E.L.T.	English Language Teaching.
E.M.A.I.R	Ecole des Mines de l'Aïr.
E.N	Ecole Normale.
E.N.A/Sup.	Ecole Nationale d'Administration/Supérieure.

E.N.S.P	Ecole Nationale de la Santé Publique.
E.N.I.C.A.S	Ecole Nationale des Infirmiers et des Cadres de l'Action sociale.
I.N.D.R.A.P	Institut National de Documentations, de Recherche et d'Animation Pédagogiques.
I.R.E.M	Institut de Recherches sur l'Enseignement des Mathématiques.
I.R.S.H	Institut de Recherches en Sciences Humaines.
M.E.N	Ministère de l'Education Nationale.
M.E.N/F.P	Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Formation Professionnelle.
M.E.N/E.S.R.T	Ministère de l'Education Nationale, de l'Enseignement, Supérieur, de la Recherche et de la Technologie.
M.E.N.R	Ministère de l'Education Nationale et de la Recherche. (Current acronym of the Ministry).
O.R.T.N	Office de la Radio et de la Télévision du Niger.
P.C.M.S	Présidence du Conseil Militaire Suprême.
P.P.N/R.D.A	Parti Progressiste Nigérien du Rassemblement Démocratique Africain.
T.E.F.L.	Teaching English as a Foreign Language.
T.E.S.L.	Teaching English as a Second Language.
T.E.S.O.L.	Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages.
U.N.E.S.C.O	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation.
U.N.I.C.E.F.	United Nations Children Fund.
U.N.I.S.	Union Nigérienne des Indépendants et Sympathisants.
V.S.O.	Voluntary Service Overseas.

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

> Après la mise au monde, il reste l'Education. Vivre c'est persévérer dans son être. Et pour une société donnée, c'est par l'Education qu'elle se perpétue dans son être physique et social. Il s'agit d'un accouchement collectif qui prolonge l'enfantement biologique individuel (**Joseph Ki Zerbo 1990:15**).

1.1 Statement of the Problem

> Si de 1960 à 1990, le nombre des enfants scolarisés s'est fortement accru, il en va inversement du niveau scolaire. C'est le constat amer – de tout le monde – et notamment d'un ancien instituteur [qui fut Inspecteur de l'Enseignement, Directeur de la Télévision Scolaire, Directeur Général de l'Office de la Radio et de la Télévision du Niger, Directeur Adjoint de l'Institut National de Documentation, de Recherche et d' Animation Pédagogiques et enfin Ministre de l'Education Nationale] qui a connu – expérience oblige – la grandeur et la décadence de l'école nigérienne ... (Askofaré, 1990:8).

In effect, everyday conversation with Nigérien teachers, pupils' parents, students or even administrators from the Ministry would reveal their dissatisfaction with the output of the educational system as demonstrated in the national newspaper, *Sahel Dimanche:*

> Si donc témoins et artisans – enseignants chevronnés, conseillers pédagogiques et inspecteurs – de la grandeur de l'école nigérienne en sont venus au pincement de coeur, c'est que l'institution scolaire a atteint un seuil critique à la limite de la médiocrité (Askofaré, *ibid.*).

Having worked for more than twenty years in the Ministry and occupied different positions, the researcher has the feeling (a) that the problems the Ministry is

facing are so overwhelming that one is tempted to say that the educational system is trapped in a vicious circle, and (b) more interestingly and optimistically, that English (Language Teaching) may be regarded as a dynamic component of the curriculum capable of contributing to the enhancement of the educational system as a whole.

The problems hampering the Nigérien educational system are threefold:

(a) *organizational* ones which are caused by the lack of up-to-date internal organization of the Ministry, the gap between planned strategies and reality, the effect of the inherited colonial system;

(b) *academic* ones reflected in the inappropriateness of the curriculum as a whole and of teacher training and of teaching materials in particular;

(c) *financial and material shortages* which exist because of the limited financial resources of the Ministry.

To start with the first type of problems, it should be pointed out that the Ministry itself is overburdened, that administrative procedures are very slow, and more importantly that some essential departments are missing from the internal structure of the Ministry which prevents the latter from having full control of such pedagogical issues as curriculum development and evaluation, and teacher education.

As mentioned in point (a), another problem relating to the organization of the Ministry is the gap between planned strategies and reality. *D.E.P. (Direction des Etudes et de la Planification)*, the department responsible for planning, determines the needs of the schools throughout the country in terms of classrooms to be repaired or new ones to be built and consequently the new furniture to be provided;

another task of this department is to keep up-to-date statistical data regarding the school population and the teaching force. Unfortunately, each new academic year starts with a host of shortcomings: shortage of classrooms and classroom furniture, lack of teaching materials, overcrowded classrooms and shortage of teachers for some classes (Primary Education).

The effect of the inherited colonial system is the last aspect in connection with point (a). Broadly speaking, Francophone West African countries are very much influenced by French education. This is true of Niger where after thirty years of independence, the school system is still greatly influenced by the former colonial power. In effect, it is a replica of the French system inasmuch as the two school systems are quite the same, the degrees and diplomas equivalent to one another, and more crucially the different syllabi are almost identical (see ch 2.4). Moumouni (1962:12) explains this problem as follows:

> The inadequacy of the educational system inherited from the colonial era, in its conception, orientation, structure and content is at times vaguely realised, at times explicitly recognized and expressed. Several attempts born of this realisation have been made, some in the direction of 'adapting' educational programmes, often under the supervision of the former colonial power...

The World Survey of Education (1961:548) discusses in the following lines the same issue, referring to the similarity existing between the French courses, examinations, and those implemented in former French colonies:

> As development proceeded at an ever increasing pace, the need was felt for local leaders and, at the beginning, these could only be trained in France. Unless they held French educational qualifications, candidates had to give up the idea of further studies or of specialization in certain branches. After the adoption of the 1946 constitution (*vide infra*), therefore, the organization of the school system and in particular the examination system were brought into line with those obtaining in France.

With respect to the academic problems mentioned above, it should be noted:

(a) that the first and most serious discrepancy regarding the curriculum is the

obsoleteness of the various syllabi from Primary to Secondary Education. A good illustration of such a situation is the curriculum of Primary Education which has been in operation since 1948, long before independence;

(b) that most of the syllabi are not only overloaded with inappropriate and meaningless content, but are above all felt to be one of the main causes of pupils' lack of motivation;

(c) that textbooks and other teaching manuals are introduced and used without being piloted;

(d) that initial training does not provide the trainees with sufficient practice, and that in-service training sessions happen very seldom. It should be mentioned at this stage that it is the researcher's belief, that of the various parts of the curriculum, English Language Teaching (E.L.T.) may be regarded – for the time being – as one component which does not come within the aforementioned criticism. Conversely, the syllabus, the teaching material, the teaching approaches, the pupil assessment, and the teacher education of this subject have constantly been developing with the result that it can be considered to be a dynamic and successful subject. Needless to say, this area of success will be one object of the investigation on which this thesis will attempt to concentrate.

The third and last type of problem referred to is undoubtedly due to the limited financial means of the Ministry, which represents about 20 *per* cent of the national budget (Cf Chap. 2).This is very significant in that most of the African countries South of the Sahara do not allocate that proportion of their national budget to education. Other sources of financial support are friendly countries, the World Bank through *Project Education II*, *U.N.E.S.C.O*, and *U.N.I.C.E.F.* In spite of the governmental and international efforts deployed to breathe new life

into the Nigérien educational system, a lot still has to be done. As a matter of fact, education is free from Primary to University. What is more, Niger is one of the few countries where pupils are provided – free of charge – with all the classroom-tools ranging from textbooks to pencils. In neighbouring Nigeria, the country considered to be the giant of Africa, the community contributes to the education of their children as shown by Anwukah (1978:107-108):

> Starting in 1976, primary education became tuition free in all states as a result of a new federal scheme (Universal Free Education Scheme UPE), but parents provide their children's uniform [...]. All secondary schools in Nigeria are fee paying...

It is indeed the belief of the author of this thesis that the state cannot continue to afford to offer free education and free teaching materials; it is also the view of the author that solutions which satisfy pupils' parents, the Ministry, and the entire nation, ought to be found as soon as possible. As pointed out by Thompson (1981:21), education is a social institution which is also acted upon by other factors operating in our societies, and therefore, should not be monopolized by the state. A good illustration of this reality is given by the same author (*ibid.*):

> If we conceive of education as a football, we should remember that we educationists are not the only players on the field who are kicking it and that other players, politicians, economists, parents, pupils, and others, may be seeking to kick it in different directions. What actually happens to the ball will depend however not simply upon who kicks or who stops it, but also upon the direction of the wind, the slope of the field and the length of the grass. The wind may represent the general current of change within a society which some of us will wish to resist and others to go along with; the slope of the field may represent the resources which are available to us – where they are limited we may indeed have an uphill task ahead of us; and long grass may represent the many factors of inertia existing in our situation including clusters of attitudes and values prevalent in our society contrary to those we are seeking to implement.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the complex nature of Nigérien educational mishaps has caused the Ministry to hold about fifteen seminars since independence, and two national debates on education (1976 and 1982), but despite these

initiatives little has been achieved in the intervening years. One of the main reasons for this unsatisfactory situation is undoubtedly the dearth of research in the field of Nigérien education. Clearly, any national debates should be held in the light of prior and current research if they are to be effective. The nature of such debates held in Great Britain (similar in many respects to the Nigérien ones) have been described by Hopkins and Reid (1985:2):

> The popularisation of the education debate would perhaps be no bad thing if it were not for the fact that the debate is so often rhetorical, and based on prejudice and intuition rather than on understanding. That this is so is partly a function of the lack of research tradition in education and partly the public nature of the debate, – everyone nowadays is an expert on education.

Hence this study intends to pinpoint and analyse the lingering problems hindering the system through an empirical inquiry, and suggest solutions conducive to its enhancement.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to evaluate secondary education in the Niger Republic through a contrastive examination of the major components of the curriculum so as to determine precisely the shortcomings impeding the development of the educational system and finally work out suggested solutions. It must be said at once that, in this study, emphasis is laid upon the second type of problems mentioned in the premiss (*vide supra*). Thus the prime aim of this research is to find solutions to the problems encountered by the Ministry, and above all to answer the question under study, i.e *"To what extent could English (Language Teaching) - which is felt as a dynamic and successful subject on account of the innovations it has undergone- contribute to the enhancement of the educational*

system?"

In order to achieve this prime aim, the study will seek to explore the following basic questions:

(1) What are the Nigérien secondary school pupils' perceptions and attitudes toward school in general and the curriculum in particular?

(2) Do these perceptions and attitudes vary according to sex, residence, school status, educational levels and regions?

(3) What are their attitudes, motivational orientation and achievements in English as a foreign language?

(4) Do these attitudes in English vary from one educational level to another?

(5) Is English an important subject?

(6) What is then the place of English in the curriculum and in Niger?

(7) What are the teachers' attitudes toward their initial training and the current teacher education? In what way(s) does English Language teachers' training differ from that of teachers of other subjects (French, Mathematics, Science, Humanities)?

(8) What is the nature of the innovations implemented in English Language Teaching? To what extent do these innovations differ from those experienced in other subjects?

(9) What are the positive ELT experiences that could be beneficial to other subjects and vice versa, and what effect would this exchange have on the curriculum and the system as a whole?

(10) What strategies should be adopted in order to bring about positive and fruitful changes in the system?

1.3 Significance of the Study

The significance of the present study is fourfold: (1) it is the first piece of research hitherto undertaken in the field of Nigérien education which encapsulates all levels of the schooling system and pedagogical considerations, (2) it offers a comprehensive description of the evolution of the Nigérien formal education through time and space, (3) and thus contributes to the enhancement of education awareness in Niger; (4) finally it is hoped that it will give insight and skills useful to the Ministry, and will inspire more research inasmuch as it raises issues and questions which indeed require further investigation. Aware of the dearth of literature on educational research in Niger, the author has purposely developed as much as possible the chapters on methodology and data analysis – which undoubtedly will be referred to by students at Niamey University and by teachers when dealing with action research.

Far from being presumptious, it should be mentioned that students, teachers as well as Ministry officials involved in the investigation expressed a genuine interest in the study, commenting on the importance of the present research. Comments include the following one, given as a conclusion by one of the respondents:

> Les conclusions que je tire sont évidemment relatives à l'école nigérienne et je crois que des chercheurs comme l'auteur de ces questionnaires vont faire oeuvre utile lorsqu'ils vont approfondir tous les problèmes qui se posent à l'école nigérienne. C'est en essayant de les approfondir, en essayant de les éclaircir, en essayant de les situer, de leur donner une dimension exacte, c'est par des études approfondies sur les maux de l'école nigérienne qu' on arrivera à trouver une solution; je pense que l'auteur de ces questionnaires a bien fait de se pencher sur les différent problèmes qui se posent à l'école nigérienne, de faire des investigations en vue de les identifier, de connaître leur

> dimension et de leur trouver peut être des solutions. Je pense que si des initiatives comme ça se prennent à plusieurs niveaux, par plusieurs personnes, le résultat sera encourageant et permettra cette amélioration de l' enseignement au Niger que nous souhaitons tous (Interview transcript No. 7.)

In a nutshell, the contribution of the present piece of research finds its justification in the following statements given by Eisner (1981:6):

> The validity of the research is the product of the persuasiveness of a personal vision; its utility is determined by the extent to which it informs.

1.4 Limitation

In a piece of work centred on the shortcomings and the discrepancies within a specific area of education, (in this instance formal education *per se*) it is essential to comprehend, explain, analyse as much as possible, the major setbacks inherent in the system. This indeed has brought us to leave out adult education and to treat informal / *éducation originelle* (*vide infra*) in a synoptic fashion. Another dimension of education that this thesis does not treat sufficiently is the place and role of national languages in the curriculum. It should be pointed out right away, that it is the author's belief, that national languages ought to have the place they deserve in the Nigérien educational system, *viz.* the status of media of instruction; however, considering the complexity and the magnitude of this issue we have found it justified that it could be studied independently as a research project.

In addition, we should not fail to point out that in view of the exhaustive nature of the investigations to be carried out (cf Ch.4 and 5), the inquiry pertaining to the pupils' achievements has been limited to the collection of their average aggregates of the first term examination in such subjects as Mathematics, French, and English.

Furthermore, it is generally acknowledged that change is a sensitive issue, that

many social factors are involved and many parameters taken into consideration; as a result the researcher does not pretend that solutions to all the problems inherent in the education system will be suggested by the present study.

Finally, since pupils embark on the learning of English in Secondary Education and remain in contact with that language for four or seven years, we have found it reasonable to limit our investigations in E.L.T. solely to that area of education.

1.5 Methodology and Procedures

It is propitious at this stage to define the key-concepts upholding the main hypothesis. As already mentioned in points 1.1 and 1.2 English Language (Teaching) is perceived as a dynamic, successful component of the curriculum on account of the innovations that it has undergone; it is furthermore felt that the experience gained in English Language Teaching can be exploited as an impetus for the enhancement of the rest of the system.

Indeed this is, briefly stated, the hypothesis which is at the heart of our study, and as Burroughs (1971:20) expresses it, a hypothesis is a hunch or an educated guess which is advanced for the purpose of being tested. And the way our hypothesis is to be tested is by means of an empirical inquiry of the views of teachers, pupils / students, policy-makers, and other concerned parties, on the development of the educational system in Niger, and that of English in particular.

But before tackling the methodology and procedures which will uphold the study proper, our hunch, which encapsulates three key concepts, namely (a) English Language Teaching, (b) dynamic / successful, (c) innovations, needs to be defined and delimited.

To start with the first concept, i.e *"English Language Teaching"*, we have to

indicate its place and role in the World in general, and in Niger in particular. In effect, English is undoubtedly the most widespread language, thus becoming a world language. According to David Crystal (1987:357), about 300 million people use English as their mother tongue, a further 300 million as a second language and a further 100 million use it fluently as a foreign language. The same author points out surveys undertaken by Unesco and other world organizations to reinforce the statistical impression: over 60 countries use English as an official or semi-official language; it has a prominent place in a further 20 countries, and it is either dominant or well established in all six continents. English is the main language of books, newspapers, airports and air-traffic control, international business and academic conferences, science, technology, medicine, diplomacy, sports, international competitions, pop music, and advertising. Finally, it should be pointed out that – along with Arabic, Chinese, French, Russian, and Spanish –English is an official language of the United Nations.

With respect to the place alloted to English in the Niger Republic, one may advance that it is neither an official language nor a semi-official language because of the country's colonial past. However, it should be added that English in Niger is used in first and second cycle schools of Secondary Education where over 65,806 students take it as a compulsory subject (D.E.P:1989). Besides schools of Secondary Education, the University is another institution where English is taught either as a requirement, or as a medium of instruction for prospective teachers of English as a foreign language. Mention should be made of schools which are not under the supervision of the Ministries of National Education and Higher Education. Thus, professional schools such as the National School of Administration (E.N.A), or the Regional School of Civil Aviation (E.A.M.A.C) have included English (for

Specific purposes) in their training progamme.

In order to define the place of English in Niger, we need to refer to Dubin and Olshtain (1986:5-9) whose approach to English as the target language (T.L) is viewed along a continuum with five points of reference. Thus at one end of the continuum (or the first point of reference) is an English speaking setting where the language is spoken natively by most of the population, e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. A little away from that end of the continuum (i.e the second point of reference) are countries where English is one of two or more official languages spoken natively by at least part of the population, e.g., Canada, and South Africa. Further along (third point of reference) there are countries where English is the only official language but is not the native language of more than a small minority of the people, e.g., Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia, and others. Moving further along and approaching the other end (fourth point of reference) there are countries where English is neither the national language nor one of the official languages, but it is given special status because of historical factors such as ex-colony or mandate status, or because of social and economic reasons: the case of Israel, Kenya, Ethiopia, Malaysia and others (Fishman *et al.* 1977). Finally, at the other end of the continuum (fifth and last point of reference) there are countries where English is taught as only one of the several foreign languages available to the students within the school system, even though it may be recognized as the most important foreign language. One can then say that the place of English in Niger is at the latter end of the continuum inasmuch as it is taught at school along with other foreign languages *viz* German and Spanish. In other words, the classroom is the sole instance where English is dealt with in a sustained and well-planned fashion: (1) English teaching hours vary from two to

five a week, (2) there exist set objectives for the learning of English, (3) the learning is constantly assessed, (4) textbooks are used to reinforce the language learning. As regards the set objectives for learning English, the different syllabi (from sixième to terminale) divide them into (a) general objective(s) and (b) specific objectives. The first type of objectives lay an emphasis on communication as the prime target while the second type of objectives determine what to achieve in terms of the four skills: **listening, speaking, reading, and writing.** Broadly speaking, the learning objective does not aim at approaching the competence and performance of the average-educated native speaker. Hence the goal to be achieved in terms of **speaking**, for instance, would be intelligibility and the use of syntactically and semantically acceptable sentences. It is in that context (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) that we intend to deal with the first notion throughout the study.

As for the second concept of the hypothesis, i.e *dynamic / successful*, it chiefly refers to the steady endeavours undertaken at the level of the syllabus, the teaching materials, the methodologies, the assessment of the pupils, and the teacher initial training and development, as well as to the outcomes resulting from these efforts. Again, regarding the hunch described above, it hints that the actions initiated and carried out in the field of teaching English are not only multifarious, but have led to the improvement of the teaching of English in Niger, hence proving the efficiency, the success of the efforts deployed in T.E.F.L. Amongst these actions the following ones can be mentioned: (a) the constant use of English during English lessons and English teachers meetings; (b) the frequent organization of on-the-job training sessions also known as *mini journées pédagogiques*; (c) the continued training of trainers at the National Institute for Educational Research (I.N.D.R.A.P) when

the training of trainers of other subjects had come to a halt following a unilateral presidential decision; (d) teachers of English are the only ones – for the time being – to have designed with the help of native speakers four sets of pupils' and teachers' textbooks, *English for the Sahel*, which are being piloted in schools across the country; (e) in addition, they are closely involved in the development of the curriculum, thus find themselves in the position to come up with constructive views; (f) ten years ago, the Ministry relied heavily on foreign English teachers; presently, the English teaching force is mainly composed of nationals; (g) unlike in other subjects, suggestions for change mostly come from English language teachers and advisers; (h) finally, teachers and pupils alike show a certain interest in the learning or in the teaching of the language. In a nutshell, teachers of English are closely involved in the key areas of education, i.e syllabus design, curriculum development, teacher education and material design.

Regarding the last notion of our hypothesis, i.e *innovation*, views differ as to its definition and nature. As a matter of fact, Nicholls (1983:2) suggests that in everyday usage the words "change" and "innovation" are frequently used interchangeably and while this is also to be found in the literature a clear distinction between the two is also made. Owen (1973) (cited in Nicholls 1983:2) defines innovation as something which is essentially new rather than a re-ordering of something which already exists into a new pattern; therefore change calls for a response but innovation requires initiative. CERI (1969) gives the following view about innovation:

> .... understand innovation to mean those attempts at change in an educational system which are consciously and purposefully directed with the aim of improving the present system. Innovation is not necessarily something new but is something better and can be demonstrated as such.

Noel (1974) argues that innovation is not used solely for its own sake; that

innovation would mean:

> Any change in one component of the educational system which is not made simply for the sake of change but with the intention of promoting improvements in the aspect concerned and- having regard to the close interdependence of all such aspects- in the system as a whole.

With the exception of Owen' s view, all the definitions mentioned above have room in the present study. With such definitions in mind, we intend to analyse and evaluate the different innovations / changes that occurred in the field of English Language Teaching in the Niger Republic. Finally, it should be pointed out that these innovations are to be found in the constant search for appropriate teaching materials, the training of teachers and of trainers for an enhancement of their skills, curriculum development, and pupil assessment (*vide supra*).

With respect to methodology, we may say that the nature of the study and the specificity of the problem to be explored led us to resort mostly to qualitative research through interviews, classroom observations, study of documents and archival records. However, considering the great number of pupils/students and teachers and the degree of representativeness expected from the data they offered, we have found it justifiable to administer questionnaires for these two categories of participants.

Furthermore, in order to eliminate bias as much as possible, we have attempted a methodological triangulation. Thus, the major issues involved in the development of the educational system in Niger, and in English Language Teaching in particular, are examined in three instances: (1) they are examined in chapter two of the thesis through contrastive analysis, (2) in chapter three which discusses the development of the major issues involved in English Language Teaching in Niger, (3) the same issues are studied empirically and examined in chapters four

and five. Finally, in some instances, investigator triangulation has also been used to minimize the investigator subjectivity.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The study falls into seven chapters. The first of these chapters is an introduction to the study. Such important points as the research problem, the purpose, significance, limitation of the study as well as the methodology adopted to carry out the fieldwork are dealt with.

As for the next chapter its *raison d' être* is to provide the reader with a brief account of (1) the Niger Republic from a geographical and historical perspective, (2) Niger's formal colonial education, which in one way or another will shed light on the following part of this chapter whose aim is to critically discuss the development of the educational system after independence.

While chapter three scrutinizes the evolution of English Language Teaching in general and in Niger in particular and empirically contrasts the main components of the curriculum, chapter four lays the emphasis on the fieldwork organization and execution.

Chapter five deals with the data analysis and interpretation while the last chapter summarizes the major issues discussed in the various chapters of the thesis and suggests a set of recommendations for an improvement of the educational system.

Chapter II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE NIGERIEN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

> Development can only come from within. It must be endogenous, throughout by people for themselves, springing from the soil on which they live and attuned to their aspirations, the conditions of their natural environment, the resources at their disposal and the particular genius of their culture... Education should accordingly contribute to the promotion of such endogenous development **(Mahtar M'Bow in Thompson 1981:201)**.

2.1 Introduction

The present chapter concerns itself with an analysis of the historical background of the Nigérien educational system and is preceded by a synoptic introduction to Niger geographical and historical background. To help the discussion of formal education and for the sake of fairness towards pre-colonial Africa – for as French people say, *il faut rendre à César ce qui est à César, et à Dieu ce qui est à Dieu* – a brief section about *original education* (*vide infra*) has been included. It is important not only to know the nature of this form of education, but also and above all, to know 'how much of it is still relevant to the new system of education that dangerously emphasizes literacy and technical instruction to the neglect of education for life' (Castle 1966:39).

It is propitious at this stage to specify the meaning given to education in the present work, and the ways it differs or resembles education in pre-colonial Africa.

As people say, charity begins at home and that is why we start with a standard definition provided by U.N.E.S.C.O (in Thompson 1981:23):

> Education is defined as comprising organised and sustained communication designed to bring about learning. Communication in the sense implied here requires a relationship between two or more people involving the transfer of information, 'organised' means planned in a sequence with established aims and curricula, and 'sustained' means that the learning experience has duration and continuity. 'Learning' is taken to mean any change in behaviour, knowledge, understanding, skills or capabilities which the learner retains and which cannot be ascribed simply to physical growth or to the development of inherited behaviour patterns.

As is evident this definition does not give full satisfaction in that it encapsulates educational practices pertaining to pre-colonial Africa (*vide infra*). Only the last part attempts to differentiate the new form of education from the pre-colonial one by making the former go beyond the hereditary aspect it purports to transmit. In effect, like formal education, *éducation originelle* (Cf 2.3.2) also encompassed learning based on organised and sustained communication, for the various aspects of taught "curricula" are not only graded but also taught during a certain period of the child' s existence. It goes without saying that the transfer of information in *éducation originelle* also implies the existence of a relationship between two or more people. Another similarity between the two systems lies in the aims whereby learning purports to bring change in the learners behaviour, knowledge, understanding, skills etc. *Education originelle* fails to meet the last criterion set by U.N.E.S.C.O in that learning in pre-colonial Africa is mainly based on physical growth (age groups) or on the development of inherited behaviour patterns (children learning to take their parents' jobs within the society).

However without engaging any polemic as to the exact definition of education, we simply say that, in the present work, it is referred to as the schooling system brought to West Africa by the French. Righteously, some francophone milieu in Africa call this form of education *l' Ecole française.* If this is the context in which

the terminology is used, then we are dealing with formal education as opposed to informal education which is provided outside schools.

Before entering the gist of the subject some clarification needs to be given to the country's geographical and historical background because:

1. Ordinary people very often mistake the Niger Republic with its English speaking neighbour, the Federal Republic of Nigeria;

2. Such a briefing would shed light on the issues discussed in the subsequent chapters, for it is evident that the issues and problems of any education system are in part determined by historical and geographical factors. The distribution of the population, the density of habitation, the network of communications are, for example, important factors in the nature of the education system. Similarly, the inheritance of past philosophies and methods of education – particularly when they were imposed from outside the country, as in the case of former colonies – cannot be ignored when analysing the contemporary situation.

The main concern of this chapter, i.e the historical background of the Nigérien educational system, is viewed from two distinctive time perspectives: the pre-colonial and colonial eras, and the post-independence era. Thus, the pre-colonial and colonial eras section briefly tackles *éducation originelle* traditional to Africa as a whole, the role of Islam in pre and colonial Niger, the establishment of formal education and its implications in the lives of the indigenous people as well as the latters' attitudes to and perceptions of the new form of education.

The last section of this chapter not only depicts post-independence education in Niger, but also attempts to bring to the surface the salient and determining policies which have given the educational system the face it has today.

Hydrographie

- Cours d'eau permanent
- Cours d'eau temporaire
- Lac permanent
- Chott, sebkha

Communications

- Route internationale revêtue
- Route et piste internationales (non revêtues)

Villes

- ○ moins de 200 000 habitants
- ● de 200 000 à 1 000 000 d'habitants
- ■ Plus de 1 000 000 d'habitants

LE CONTINENT AFRICAIN

Echelle 1/40 000 000

0 400 800 1 200 km

2.2 Geographical Considerations

2.2.1 Physical Aspects

Encompassing an area of 1,267,000 square kilometers (489,191 square miles), the Niger Republic, the largest country in West Africa, is bounded to the North by Algeria and the Libyan Arab Republic, the Republic of Benin and the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the South, the Republic of Chad to the East, and the Republics of Burkina Faso and Mali to the West. This position in the midst of the African continent means that the country is landlocked, the nearest port being Cotonou (in Benin) 900 kilometers away from Niamey the Nigérien capital (See maps 1 and 2). Comparing Niger to the 'poor African Canada – 3/4 of the northern part is hot desert, with possible mineral riches and like Canada, the populated South is next to the giant of the continent, i.e Nigeria –' Donaint and Lancrenon in Salifou (1989:11) beautifully capture the geographical reality of the country in the following lines:

> **Le Niger se présente comme une sorte de Canada africain pauvre [...]: les trois quarts septentrionaux en désert chaud, recélant sans doute des richesses minérales à peine inventoriées; et une frange sud habitée jouxtant, comme le Canada, le géant de son continent, ici le Nigéria. L'ocre et le sable partout, sauf pendant un court intermède pluvieux qui reverdit un sol ingrat: miracle annuel.**

The Niger Republic was named after its only river which runs for about 550 kilometers in the western part of the country. This river bears many names according to the places it crosses. Thus from Guinea (Conakry) – where the origin of the river is located – to Diafarabé in Mali it is called *Djoliba*; from that region of Mali to Illo in Nigeria it is known as *Issa-Béri* (which entails that the name it is given is the one just mentioned); finally from Illo to the delta, it is called *Kwara*. However, as Donaint and Lancrenon in Salifou (1989:11) note the same river was called *Eguerew n'eguerew* by Touareg Iwilliminden (who were Berber offspring), a

name from which probably derived *Niguer* then *Niger*, the name of the country.

The country is geographically divided into three major zones as one moves from the North to the South. The largest region to the North, which spreads over 1,120,000 square kilometers, is the domain of the Sahara desert where it hardly rains. Despite a hostile environment, dates, potatoes, wheat, and vegetables are grown in the region's centre and also in the Kaouar and the Djado oases. A main characteristic of the Saharan zone is the diurnal temperature differences. For instance in Bilma, the monthly maximum and minimum temperature average for the period 1951-1982 is a maximum of 42.2 degrees centigrades and a minimum of 22.9 degrees centigrades (Bagna, 1990). Finally, it is in that part of the country that the largest mountain range is found, that is, the Aïr Massif which at its peak reaches 6,000 feet on the Mont Bagazan.

Located just to the South of the Sahara, the Sahelian zone is subdivided into two sub-zones because of vegetation and climatic considerations as well as the activities of the inhabitants. The nomadic zone is favourably inclined to livestock breeding, and the sedentary zone propitious for agriculture and livestock rearing. The vegetation of this zone is characterized by a steppe of acacias and thorny trees. Finally, it should be added that the Sahelian zone registers more rainfall than the Sahara.

The third zone is known as the Sudanic zone, and covers the southern part of the country, between 15 degrees West and less than 14 degrees East. With more than 23.62 inches of rain fall per year, it is the wettest and the most wooded region of all. Possessing the richest soils of the country, it is also the area of cultivation par excellence. The staple food being millet, it goes without saying that it is grown on a larger scale in that area of the country; such other cereals as sorghum, rice

(along the Niger River), maize, beans are also cultivated.

The fact that Niger is landlocked and that its two-thirds belong to the Sahara explains the harshness of its climate. It has many times been severely hit by Sahelian droughts. Thus, from 1967 to 1973 the country sadly experienced a drought which decimated more than half of the livestock and wrecked the agricultural sector; it is not surprising that this tribulation brought about serious economic, political and social predicaments. Hardly had the country recovered from hardship than it was struck by another drought in 1982-83. Consequently, the Nigérien people do not rely mostly on rainy seasons which tend to be capricious. Hence, during the dry season (from October to May) people devote themselves – wherever water is available – to *culture de contre saison* or dry season farming.

2.2.2 Demographic Considerations

Demography is a key factor which must be taken into consideration when planning education. Any census miscalculation may have serious effects on the system as a whole: over-crowded classes, shortage of teachers and teaching materials, resulting in undesirable pedagogical implications.

Even though the Niger Republic is the largest country in West Africa, it is nonetheless amongst the least populated countries on the African continent. This entails that it has one of the lowest population densities in Africa, 5.72 inhabitants *per* square kilometre, compared to the average density in Africa which is 10 inhabitants *per* square kilometre (Sidikou in Atlas du Niger, 1980:31). Recent statistical data show that 75 *per* cent of the population live on 1/4 of the territory, that the *département* of Agadez (56 *per* cent of the total area) shelters only 2 *per* cent of the total population, whereas that of Maradi in the South (3 *per* cent of the total

area) shelters one in every five Nigériens (M.E.N 1990:4). In effect, the national census carried out in May/June 1988 revealed that the population amounted to 7,249,596 inhabitants of whom 3,592,263 were men and 3,657,333 were women. As for the Nigérien diaspora, it is estimated that between one million and two million people are living in neighbouring countries, in coastal African countries (Ivory Coast, Ghana, Togo) and the Sudan (M.E.N.:*ibid.*).

It is however worth noting that despite what has been said about the size of the population and that of the country, the demographic features remain very dynamic. Hence, the total fecundity rate, i.e on average the number of children born to every woman before menopause (estimated at 50) is 7.1, which is very high. Recent studies on Niger's demographic growth predict that the population will be about 10 million by the year 2000, 14 million in 2010 (See table 2.1). Other characteristics of the Nigérien population, include an annual growth rate which was recently estimated at 3.4% (M.E.N 1990:4), the fact that the population is extremely young (48.9 per cent of the total population are less than 15 years old), and that in 1988, 1,167,640 children were at the age of attending primary school (i.e between 6-7 and 12-13 years old). All in all, the rapid growth of the Nigérien population may be viewed as a source of worry for the Ministry, considering its limited resources on the one hand, and its main objective which is education for all on the other.

This synoptic background of the demographic aspects would be incomplete without summarily mentioning the various ethnic groups sharing this geographical space. The population may be divided into sedentaries and nomads; the first are farmers and live in the southern part of the country, and the latter are cattle breeders and live in the northern part of Niger. However, as Salifou (1989:20-

1) puts it this specification is not so simple, since it is commonplace to find a nomad farmer, and sedentaries who practice cattle rearing. Furthermore, in many regions both categories of people live together at least during the dry season. The sedentaries may be roughly divided into three main groups (Salifou:*ibid.*):

(a) in the western part of Niger live the Zarma-Sonraï (also found in Mali and Benin) and the Gourmantché (also found in Burkina Faso).

(b) in the centre of the country live the Hausa (also found in Nigeria).

(c) in the East live the Kanuri (also found in Nigeria and Chad).

As for the nomads they may be divided into four groups (Salifou:*ibid.*):

(a) the Touareg who are also found in Algeria, Mali, Libya and Burkina Faso.

(b) the Tubu who are found in the regions of Gouré, N' Guigmi and Bilma. Chad is the neighbouring country where they are mostly found.

(c) the Fulbe or Peuls (in French) are found almost everywhere in the country as well as in many other West African countries.

(d) the Arabs who live in Tchirozérine known as Kunta, in Tasker and N'Gourti; the Awalad Suleymane and Shuwa in the area neighbouring the Lake Chad, and in Tassara live the Al Mouchakra.

It is noteworthy that the languages of these 8 ethnic groups (also acknowledged by the former National Charter and Constitution) were given the status of national languages and that a recent National Languages Act signed by the National Conference (Conférence Nationale 1991:39) added two other languages, *viz.* Buduma and Tassawaq, to the existing 8. Currently there are 10 national languages in Niger (Arabic, Buduma, Fulfulde, Gurmancema, Hausa, Kanuri, Tamajaq, Tas-

sawaq, Tubu and Zarma) compared to Nigeria which has more than 200 languages.

The late Boubou Hama, (quoted in Olodo, 1976:200-201), former Chairman of the Nigérien National Assembly, historian and prolific writer depicted the peaceful coexistence of the Nigérien people in these terms:

> The people who live in our country, despite their varied origins have known each other for a long time. They spring from the same historical and geographical ecology; the sharing of centuries of collaboration, the common faith of Islam – the same morals and identical rules for living – the religion of the Koran, all these have partly eliminated all ethnic barriers.

Finally, it should be added that 95 per cent of the Niger population are Moslems, that the population is more and more concentrated in towns at the expense of rural areas, which *de facto* causes school population problems, namely large classes, in places like Niamey the capital, Zinder the second town and Maradi the economic capital.

Table 2.1 — Evolution of Niger Population Growth From 1960 to the Year 2000. (Source: M.E.N. 1990).

Year	Population	Increase
1960	2,863,767	–
1970	4,016,032	1,152,265
1977	5,102,900	1,086,868
1980	5,581,234	478,334
1988	7,250,383	1,669,149
1989	7,734,620	484,283
2000	10,000,000	2,265,380
2010	14,000,000	4,000,000

Tourisme

- Plaines de l'ouest de l'Aïr
- Zone aride rocheuse
- Zone aride ensablée
- Steppe sahélienne
- Savane arborée
- Falaise importante
- ✱ Ville historique
- ◪ Gravures rupestres
- R Ruines importantes
- M Musée National
- o Artisanat
- Palmeraie
- ● Source thermale
- Cure salée (rencontre annuelle des nomades)
- Zone touristique
- ✱ Site pittoresque
- ▲ Campement touristique

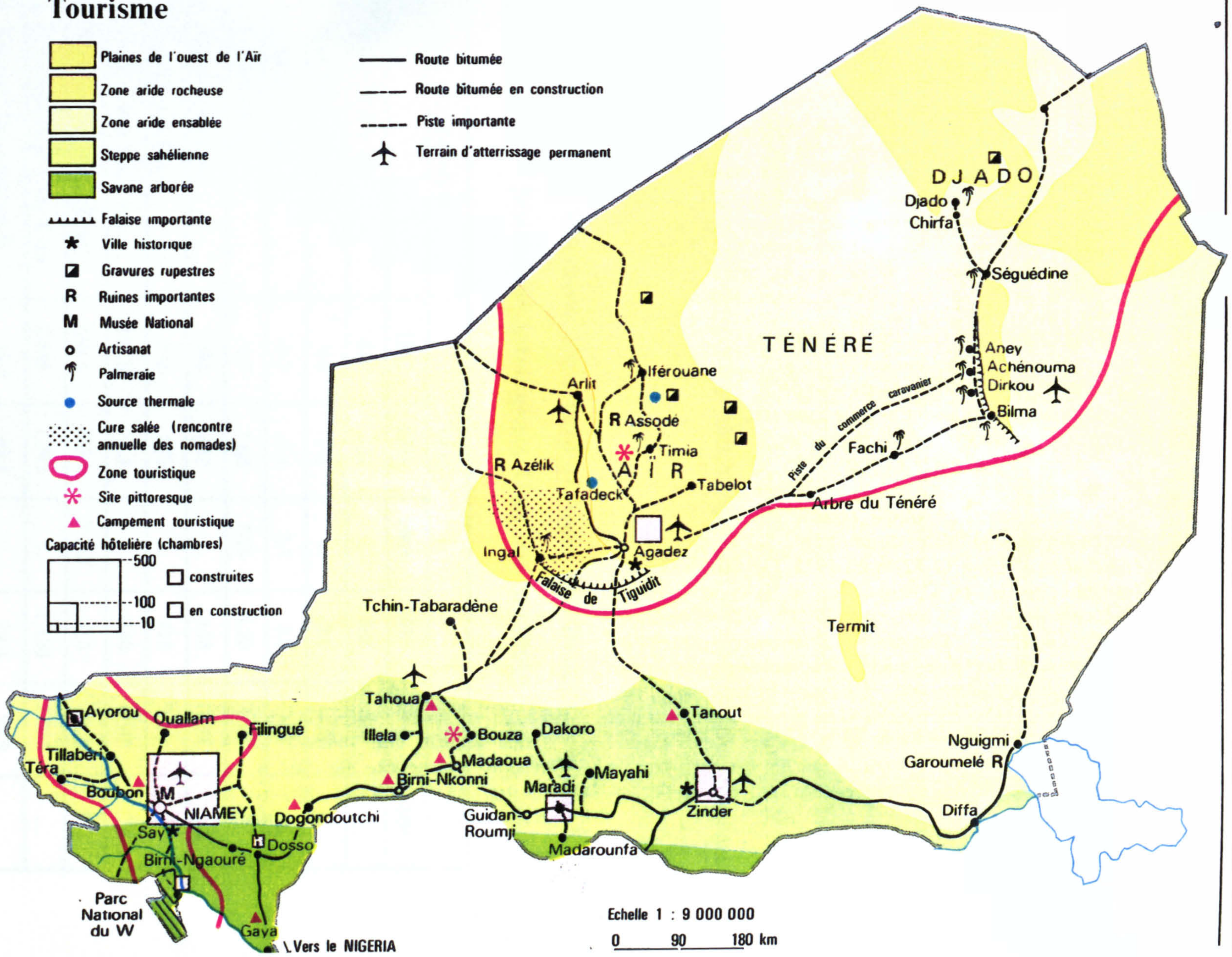
Capacité hôtelière (chambres)

500 — □ construites

100 — □ en construction

10

- Route bitumée
- Route bitumée en construction
- Piste importante
- Terrain d'atterrissage permanent



2.2.3 Economic Background

Despite the hostile nature of the climate and the aridity of the soils, the Niger Republic strives to achieve economic take-off thanks to the determination and perseverance of the people and the income yielded by such natural resources as uranium (in Arlit) and coal (in Anou Araren). The iron, gold and oil reserves recently discovered will certainly give a fillip to the economic and social life of the country. Tables 2.2 and 2.3 give ample details about the main aspects of the economy of Niger and three other neighbouring countries: Benin, Burkina Faso and Togo.

Table 2.2 — Economic Structure of Niger and Benin (from the Economist Intelligence Unit No. 2 (1990)

Macroeco-Indicators	Niger			Benin		
	1987	1988	1989	1987	1988	1989
GDP(CFA fr bn)	679	730	...	503	534	...
Real GDP growth %	0.4	7.5	...	-3.6	-1.8	...
Cons.Price Infl. %	-6.7	-1.4	2.7	3.8	4.3	...
Population mn	6.7	7.03	7.25	4.30	4.45	4.60
Exports fob $ mn	363	369	...	168	189	...
Imports fob $ mn	343	373	...	418	439	...
Current Account $ mn	-136.8	-94.3	...	-140	-170	...
Reserves Excl.Gold $ mn	248.5	232.1	212.3	3.6	4.2	3.4
Total External debts $ mn	1,696	1,742	...	1,138	1,055	...
External Debt Service %	45.9	49.8	...	14.4	23.9	...

Table 2.3 — Economic Structure of Burkina Faso and Togo

Macroeco-Indicators	Burkina			Togo		
	1987	1988	1989	1987	1988	1989
GDP (CFA fr bn)	491	517	...	371.7	406.6	449.2
Real GDP growth	4.2	5.6	9.9	1.4	4.7	4.0
Consumer Price Infl.	-2.9	4.2	0.7	0.1	-0.1	-1.0
Population mn	8.3	8.5	8.7	3.15	3.25	3.36
Exports fob mn	155.0	248.7	...	283	325	325
Imports fob mn	434.4	587.5	...	362	352	345
current Account $ mn	-49.9	-83.9	...	-117.1	-62.4	-46.4
Reserves Excl.Gold $mn	322.6	320.9	265.5	354.9	232.1	285.3
Total External debts$mn	865	866	...	1,235	1,210	1,190
External Debts Service	7.4	10.4	...	21.2	26.8	12.0

CFA: Currency used in Francophone Africa; 1 FF = 50 FCFA.

GDP: Gross Domestic Product.

Consumer Price Infl. : Consumer Price Inflation.

2.3 Historical Background

2.3.1 Pre-Colonial History: An Overview

Niger's location in the midst of the *Bilad al Soudan* (Land of the Blacks) and its half-way position between the Mediterranean Sea and the Gulf of Guinea explain the strong ties which exist between the Nigérien peoples, as well as the cultural and religious similarities. They migrated toward the end of the neolithic era because of the desertification of the Sahara, which used to be a fertile region (D.Hamani, in Atlas du Niger (1980:26)). The first states created in the VIIth Century A.D were the Songhoï, and the Kanem empires. It was also during this

period that the country had its first contact with Islam. However, the XVth Century is considered to be amongst the most important eras of the Nigérien history because the Sultanate of Aïr came into existence, the Kanem empire was rebuilt as the empire of Bornou, the coming of the Hausa states, and the renaissance of the Songhoï empire.

Unlike many societies of pre-colonial Africa which are known as "acephalous", i.e headless (Blakemore & Cokesey 1981:11-4), societies of the above mentioned empires and states were highly stratified. Salifou (1989:144-6) notes that pre-colonial Nigérien society was divided into two distinct social groups, namely the free men and the slaves. The first group comprised all the members of the royal families and the common people or *Talakkawa*. The latter sub-group was divided into 'uncaste' men (farmers, herdsmen, teachers, soldiers, officers, religious leaders) and outcast people. As in most stratified African societies outcast people were frowned upon by other free men, an attitude which will later have an effect on the new form of education (*vide infra*). Thus, amongst the outcast were the blacksmiths, the potters, the butchers, the cobblers and the *griots* – whose duty in the society was not only to praise members of the royal families, warriors, the wealthy men and so forth, but also keep the oral tradition alive. In general, the *Talakkawa* were without any substantial financial means and had little say regarding political affairs though they were those in charge of the economy. As for the slaves or *baayi* they were placed at the bottom of the social ladder and had hard labour as their sole *raison d'être*.

These social stratifications, alongside other factors, somehow impeded the French colonizers in their educational undertakings in some West African countries, and in Niger in particular. Two main reasons may be put forth to explain this:

1. Nigérien kings, statesmen and religious men, including Ahmadou Kuran Daga and Amadou Dan Bassa (in the Damagaram), Alfa Saybou (in the Zarmaganda), Queen Saraunia Mangou (in the Arewa), Fihroun (the Iwillimminden statesman), distrusted the French and fought them energetically. It was in this atmosphere of hostility that captain Cazemajou and his interpreter Olivier were assassinated in Zinder, on May 5, 1898. Many other plots and uprisings were undertaken to stop the French in their conquest of what was to become the *Troisième territoire militaire du Niger* (December 20, 1900 decree), later the *Territoire militaire du Niger* (December 26, 1905 decree), then the *Territoire du Niger* (December 4, 1920), finally the *Colonie du Niger* (July 1, 1922) (Séré de Rivière 1965:234-7). However, as pointed out by Pr Salifou (1985 conference), it was only in 1916-17 that the French fully controlled the country after dismantling the last bastion of resistance in the North of the country.

2. The democratic nature of the new type of education did not suit the pre-established order. In other words, in a society where each individual has their place, it was not conceivable to have young princes learning side by side with *griots* or captives' children, or simply to have boys and girls sitting together and learning the same things. This kind of "cohabitation" was badly perceived by the society. Such perceptions of social status were so engraved in people's minds that even today, in Niger, there do exist parents who would never give their daughter's hand to a man of captive descent, be he the wealthiest and most educated person in the country. Such attitudes, as will be shown later, led the French to reconsider the democratic aspect of the new education.

2.3.2 "Education Originelle"

2.3.2.1 Some Historical Considerations

The following lines discuss pre-colonial education which for the sake of fairness will be referred to as *éducation originelle* rather than traditional education. Many educationists in using the latter terminology to depict African education prior to colonization, tend to imply the archaic nature and backwardness of that form of education, which indeed is a blinkered and unacceptable view.

In effect, any society, no matter what its organizational complexity has its own ways and means of training and educating its youth; this training and education of the youth – no matter the type of society – purport to lead to the welfare of the society as a whole. Thus, for a long period Greek education laid the emphasis on intellectual and physical activities; Roman education was based on oratorical and military training, while Funfawa (1974:15-6) tells that in France, 'the scholar was the hallmark of excellence', and that in 'the Middle Ages in England the knight, the lord and the priest were considered classical examples of a well-educated élite'. Many people forget that Africa was the first continent to have used reading and writing, thousands of years before the invention of the Greek alphabets *alpha* and *beta* (which are the roots of alphabet), and the latin word *schola* (which gave birth to the French word scolarité and the English word school (Ki-Zerbo 1990:19).

With regard to the pre-colonial African education system it was based on 'social responsibility, job orientation, political participation and spiritual and moral values' (Funfawa:*ibid.*). Many African historians and educationists, including the Burkinabé Pr Joseph Ki-Zerbo, hold the view that to consider such an educational system just as traditional would be unfair; thus Ki-Zerbo (*1990:47*) notes that

tradition is omnipresent in any culture, because 'there is no day where we do not leave the boat of tradition to enter that of modernity.'

> Ce type de formation africaine précoloniale ne saurait être qualifiée simplement de "traditionnelle" comme si la tradition n'était pas pérenne et omniprésente dans toutes les cultures. Il n'existe pas de jour où l'on quitte le bateau de la tradition pour entrer dans celui de la modernité. D'ailleurs, la scolarisation africaine précoloniale s'est développée à travers la langue arabe et parfois à travers les caractères arabes dans les langues autochtones (ajami).

After what has been said hitherto, it would be erroneous to believe that education was *terra incognita* in pre-colonial West Africa. This view is supported by Castle (1966:38) who argues that:

> One of the saddest mistakes of early missionaries was their assumption that they brought education to an entirely uneducated people. If literacy and formal schooling constitute the whole of education, they were right; but in so far as education is a preparation for living in the society into which we are born, they were profoundly wrong. For in the deepest sense African customary education was a true education.

In effect, in those days the educational institution was a school without walls inasmuch as parents, older siblings i.e brothers and sisters, the extended family, in a nutshell the whole society were responsible for the education of the youth.

2.3.2.2 Characteristics of 'Education Originelle'

Before going any further it should be made clear that when speaking of *éducation originelle* in Africa and in Niger in particular, two important parameters need to be taken into account:

1. The geographical space, i.e whether the society lives by the river, or by a mountain, or on plain lands, or in the forest, etc.
2. The religious background, i.e whether the society is islamic or animistic.

Irrespective of the above criteria, as noted by Ki-Zerbo (1990:44), the status of the African child was determined by two referential axes. The first axis is vertical

and refers to time factors such as those which determine the genetic ascendancy, parenthood, age and so forth. As for the second axis, it is horizontal and refers to alliances and associations with other age groups.

Thus, in most African societies including those of Niger, Moumouni (1968:24-5) notes the existence of clearly defined age groups:

1. The first age group gathers children of the first and second infancy, i.e from birth to the age of 8. The mother fulfills the function of the teacher while the father has hardly any role to play in the education the child. There is no sex discrimination with regard this age group.

2. The second age group pertains to the children aged between 6 and 10. It is at this stage when the first experiences of social stratification are manifested. In effect, boys are separated from girls with a view to educating them. Girls remain under the supervision of women and boys are answerable to men.

3. The third age group is that of teenagers (10-15) and their education is more oriented toward becoming a man or a woman in order to take their places within the society. Young men had to undergo a series of initiations before entering the group of adults.

As with any educational system, *éducation originelle* had its advantages and inadequacies on which Moumouni (1968:27-33) and Ki-Zerbo (1990:48-49) share the same views, and which are thus summarized.

(a) On the credit side can be placed the following aspects:

(1) the combination of theory and practice in teaching, i.e children learned while performing;

(2) education meant not only learning but also production in the interest of the

family and the community as a whole;

(3) there was no gap between society and education;

(4) culture was deeply rooted in education (e.g. importance of games, religious ceremonies, sports, dances and so forth).

(b) On the debit column however, the following points can be noted:

(1) the very low level of abstraction and generalisation which lead to an empiricism thus impeding the promotion of science;

(2) the restriction of certain areas of knowledge or some skills (medicine, pharmacology, mysticism, etc) to a limited number of people;

(3) education was mainly based on oral communication, which has brought Hampaté Bâ (1991:back cover) to say that "In Africa, when an old man dies, it is a library which burns down".

(4) the dangerous nature in those days of such initiation practices as circumcision or excision.

After this overview relating to pre-colonial Niger, we should not fail before closing this section to point out that in the Islamic regions of Niger, *éducation originelle* went alongside Koranic studies which consisted mostly of learning the Koran by heart. Those who attended such schools and some Touareg in the Aïr who used the *Tifinah* alphabet (cf Appendix F), were the only literate people before the inception of formal education. Koranic schools were so popular that in many West African countries, including Niger, the French authorities persecuted the *marabouts*, i.e the teachers preaching the Koran. Jean Suret-Canale (1964:461) depicts the French animosity against Koranic schools and *marabouts* in these terms:

Cet apport de la culture arabe fut ignoré ou jugé dangereux. L'ensemble du personnel administratif n'avait pas la moindre connaissance en la matière. Au cours de la Conquête, on a vu ce qu'il advint des bibliothèques saisies chez les vaincus... ou chez les particuliers: certains manuscripts furent détruits, d'autres se perdirent dans les collections privées de "curiosités" exotiques des officiers ou administrateurs; le reste fut expédié en France où il repose dans la poussière des réserves.... Pour l'enseignement coranique, la tournée d'inspection de l'inspecteur algérien Mariani n'eut pas de suite. On se contenta d'exercer sur les marabouts un contrôle de police.

However, finding that these exactions were no solutions leading to the extinction of Koranic schools, the French turned towards a much softer strategy (after Mariani's report in 1907) which consisted of building 'médersas' or *écoles franco-arabes* in Saint-Louis (Senegal), Tombouctou, Djenné (Mali) and Boutilimit (Mauritania). In Niger, people had to wait for about 50 years before they were allowed to have one *médersa* in Say (1957) which three years later had a school population of 127 pupils (Seré de Rivière 1965:280 & Waeyenberghe 1961:14). As might be gathered, this *médersa* was not under the supervision of the Ministry of Education but rather of that of the Interior, as if it were dealing with security matters.

It goes without saying that Koranic schools were beneficial to the pupils who attended them. Not only did they enlighten Islamic followers in their religious practices, but they also provided them with a means of writing about their history and environment in their own languages. As pointed out by Pr Ki-Zerbo (1990:47) there were two ways of transmitting knowledge:

(a) the Arabic language;

(b) *Ajami*, a combination of Arabic characters and African languages; in other words these languages (Hausa for the case of Niger) were written through Arabic. For instance, Ajami was used to keep alive Kings' genealogies, the history of some Hausa states, etc.

Today Islam is not only the religion of the vast majority of the Nigérien people, but is also the cement that holds these peoples together.

2.3.3 Colonial and Post-Colonial Historical Background

Niger was one of the last West African countries to be occupied by France. Helen Kitchen (1962:480) points out that the French did not come to Niger until 1890 after a Scot and several German explorers had already penetrated the country; that it was not until 1921, after thirty years of uncertain discussions between the English and the French as to the limits of penetration in these areas and a brief period of local military rule, that a French civil administration was established. Djibo Hamani (1980:26) explains that in many places in Niger, people fiercely resisted the colonial occupation (e.g the battles of Zinder, Kandadji, Loga, Matankari, Konni, etc) in the course of which many armed French missionaries – the German and Scottish missionaries were not armed – lost their lives. Among them were Captain Cazemajou, put to death by the Sultan Amadou Kouran-Daga of Zinder, the Lieutenant-Colonel Klobb killed by Captain Voulet and the officers Voulet and Chanoine whose dramatic deaths are referred to as *le drame de Dankori* by historians.

As regards the modern political life of the Niger Republic, it started in 1957, three years before the country became independent. Two major political parties, the Sawaba Movement or Freedom Movement – opting for total freedom from France – and the Parti Progressiste Nigérien – prone to French affiliation, were created. In the same year an elected territorial Assembly was set up with the French Governor General as President and the leader of the majority party as Vice-President of the territory. Djibo Bakary the leader of the Sawaba Movement

became Vice President, his party having won 70 *per* cent of the the territorial Assembly seats. However, this party did not last long in power, for one year later it was defeated during the referendum on Niger's adherence to the French community, a policy it adamantly opposed. In 1959 the Sawaba was outlawed, which led its leader into armed opposition. Mention should be made of the third political party, the Union Nigérienne des Indépendants et Sympathisants (UNIS), which was the traditional Chiefs' movement, and which was allied to the Sawaba party.

Independence was obtained on the 3rd of August 1960 under the leadership of President Diori Hamani. Fourteen years later, the drastic crisis engendered by the 1967-73 drought (*vide supra*) led Lieutenant-Colonel Seyni Kountché to seize power on April 15, 1974. He presided over the destiny of the country until November 10, 1987, the date on which he died. He was replaced by General Ali Saibou, democratically elected in November 1989, for a period of 5 years. Advocator of *décrispation*, a rough form of democracy, his arrival to power undoubtedly eased the move towards great reforms encompassing such new political dimensions as multipartism, a free press, a National Conference, in a word democracy proper.

This section of the modern political life of Niger would be incomplete if mention were not made of the steps made by the people to restore multipartism and democracy, – which according to the majority should, above all, start with the organization of a National Conference. Henceforth, on the 15th of November 1990, the Head of State opted for multipartism at the National Assembly. By 18th of June 1991, 37 political parties were already officially recognized (Kio Koudizé, 1991:66-7). Other associations dealing with human rights, democracy, or development were also accepted and are currently very active and efficient. Four indepen-

dent newspapers also now coexist with the two state newspapers. Thanks to the pressure of the democratic forces – trade unions, the Nigérien Students Union and political parties (with the exception of the *Mouvement National pour la Société de Développement* the party in power then) –, the financial support of Nigérien nationals living within and outside the country, and of course the manifold support of friendly countries, the National Conference was opened in Niamey, on 29th of July 1991.

The following summarizes the captivating days of 1991 when the political future of Niger was mapped out. Initially planned to last only 49 days, the importance and the seriousness of the matters under discussion, led the organizers and members to spend a total of 98 days in conference (Haské, 1992:5). After flag independence, this conference was undoubtedly the most important event in Niger's history, and affected many aspects of social life, including education which was heatedly criticized during the various meetings and plenaries of that August assembly. The motives and catalysts that led the country to demand a National Conference are *grosso modo* the following ones:

1. The degradation of the social and economic tissue translated into the great gap which existed between the rulers and the ruled, the enrichment of the people in power at the expense of the common citizens.

2. The events of February 9, 1990 in the course of which 3 students were killed and many others severely wounded.

3. The events of Tchintabaraden which occurred on the 6-7 May 1990 and during which 5 people lost their lives; from May 1990 to March 1991, 63 persons were killed in the North of the country (Kio Koudizé, 1991:57).

4. The growth of democracy in Eastern European countries, i.e case of Poland, Czechoslavakia, Romania, and of course the USSR.

5. The 16th Conference of the Heads of States of France and African countries held in Baule (France) from 19th to 21st of June, 1990. In the course of this conference, President Mitterand in substance said to his African peers that 'democracy should be discussed because it is a road to follow with that of development; it is a universal principle.' This was seen by many critics as a warning to African leaders – at least those of French speaking Africa –, and by the same token boosted the moral of democracy fighters.

6. The student and trade unions unrest which nearly brought the country to a standstill.

A National Preparatory Commission was set up to plan the National Conference. The 1,204 members of this commission came from different political parties, different trade unions, the students' union, and of course the government. They had to come to an agreement as to the objectives of the conference, the different politico-socio-economic issues to be discussed, the length of the conference itself, the principles of attendance, the procedures and regulations of the National Conference, in short everything needed for a successful and peaceful meeting. The national broadcasting radio, *la Voix du Sahel*, and the national television *Télé Sahel* gave full coverage to the conference, enabling the man in the street to listen to or to watch top officials answer questions. Of the hundreds who had to justify their political deeds, financial mismanagement or social misconduct were: the President of the Republic, top army officers including the Chief Army Commander, Ministers, diplomatic officers, custom and police officers, and Director Generals of some national companies. Amongst the various decisions taken by the National Confer-

ence was the installation, for a period of 15 months, of a provisional government headed by an elected Premier Minister in the person of Amadou Cheiffou. Another political novelty was the election of the member of the High Council of the Republic which is led by Pr André Salifou. Briefly speaking, this political body keeps an eagle's eye on the politico-socio-economic aspects of the country during the transition and makes sure that the transitional government abides by the different suggested propositions of the *cahier de charges* elaborated by the National Conference. Finally, it is noteworthy that General Ali Saibou was maintained as the nominal Republic President, with virtually no other responsibility than being the father of the nation preserving the national unity, and receiving credentials of diplomats posted to Niger.

2.4 Historical Background of the Nigérien Education System

The history of the Nigérien education system is intimately related to French colonization. Such a historical study would not stand on its own if reference were not made to the context in which the system – which lasted in French-speaking West Africa for 147 years (1815-1962) – came into existence. With respect to Niger, the system lasted about 60 years, namely from 1900 (the beginning of the conquest of the country by France) to 1960, the year in the course of which Niger obtained flag independence.

In order to capture the evolution of colonial education in Niger, and to better appreciate the characteristics of the system and the school output, the following section chronologically reconstructs French educational strategies in West Africa. It should be noted that, it is quite impossible to dissociate the Nigérien educational system from that of other Francophone West African countries inasmuch as all

these countries were under the same educational regulations and had the same administrative laws.

Such a chronological reconstruction has been compiled by Bolibaugh *et al.* (1964), who divided the French educational domination of West Africa into three historical eras, which he referred to as the Primitive period, the Formative period, and the Modern period. The first period which lasted 55 years (1815-1870) was characterized by the concentration of French metropolitan attention on one single country: Senegal. As regards Niger, the first French *mission de reconnaissance* did not even set foot in the country (*vide supra*). It is then obvious that one cannot speak of formal education in Niger in that segment of time.

As for the second period or Formative period which lasted the same life span as the Third Republic (1870-1944) Bolibaugh (1964:6) depicts it as follows:

> This period witnessed the development of a permanent colonial administration, the popularization of colonialism within the metropole, and the establishment of a comprehensive educational plan for West Africa based upon clearly defined objectives.

Hence the Niger formal education history fits in the other half of the formative period and continued in the Modern period which had the shortest life span – from 1944 to 1962–, i.e 18 years.

2.4.1 Education Under the Colonial Power

In order to have a better picture of the development of education in Niger, a synoptic description of colonial educational objectives and policies is worthwhile. In effect, unlike the English whose policy was known as the indirect rule, the French adopted a more radical approach in that their objective was a *mission civilisatrice* to be fulfilled through assimilation. It should be said in passing that the Portuguese too used the same strategy to rule over their African colonies

(Mozambique, Angola, the Cape Verde Islands and Sao Tomée and Principe). If the Belgians and the English did allow the use of local languages at school, it was rather a different reality with the French. Kitchen (1962:440) in the following lines recalls one of the main guidelines of the French conquest overseas:

> France engaged in a *mission civilisatrice*, believed its ultimate obligation to spread its language and its culture to the overseas peoples and, through a policy of assimilation, to create in its African colonies not just educated African Africans, but educated French Africans.

Many of the Nigériens who attended school in the fifties remember having been taught lessons referring to '*our ancestors, the Gauls who had blue eyes and red hair*', or having been forbidden to speak their own mother tongues for fear of being given the *symbole* - a piece of hard paper circulated amongst the pupils; the bearer of the *symbole* was severely punished by the teacher. The Nigérien pupil, in general, knew more about 'motherland' France than about Niger, which stood for almost nothing in those days. They were able to describe France's history or geography, in almost every single detail at the expense of their own.

2.4.2 The Inception of Education in Niger

Unlike in coastal Africa where education was initiated by missionaries, in Niger the establishment of schools took place with the advancement of the colonial conquest (Séré de Rivière 1965:279). Thus, once territories were conquered, there was a need on the part of the new masters to communicate with the local people. And in order to do so the French language (part of *the mission de civilisation*) was to be taught to young Nigériens, first by soldiers, then by French and African teachers. Before going any further, a quick retrospective on some of the major educational reorganisations ought to be made because of the influence they had on education in Francophone West Africa. Moumouni (1964:36-7) refers to them

as follows:

1. The 1896 education law which organised educational establishments into a) Preparatory schools, b) Elementary schools, c) Regional schools, and d) Advanced primary schools or *Ecoles Primaires Supérieures*, one *per* colony. This law when passed, did by not concern Niger for the various reasons hitherto given.

2. The 1903 decrees initiated by the Lieutenant Governor of Senegal, M.C. Guy, which referred to the regulation of elementary schools, vocational schools, the *Ecoles Primaires supérieures* and education for girls. It also stipulated the necessity for the creation of a teacher training school for indigenous people.

3. The 1911 (August 24) circular which urged colonies to work out local decrees, later to be ratified by the then Governor General, Ponty. The decree regarding Niger came into effect on November 2, 1912.

4. In 1918 another decree transformed the school structure into the following: the *Ecole de Village* run by an African teacher, the *Ecole Régionale* led by a European teacher, the *Ecole Urbaine* which also comprised classes for Europeans and Halfcastes and the *Ecole Primaire Supérieure* (E.P.S).

Having thus summarized the different official texts that gave shape to the present education system, it is propitious at this stage to recall the major objectives that the colonial power was aiming at by introducing formal education, and the means to achieve these goals.. The first immediate and obvious objective, as put by Governor General Roume (in Brown & Hiskett, 1975:213), was to train 'the auxiliaries (telegraphists, interpreters, clerks, and so forth) whose assistance was indipensable to them.' The second aim was the training of skilful artisans, and

the last was to make school an instrument that would spread and promote their civilisation. In order to achieve these goals, the French made education available – at least at the beginning – to mainly the children of 'chiefs'. In effect, as noted by Brown and Hiskett (*ibid.*)

> this would it was hoped, have the happy effect of winning the progeny of the aristocracy to French ideas and loyalties, thus neutralising future political dangers and allowing the French to rest their administration on a traditional chieftaincy which would be not only loyal but francophone.

However, like in many Islamic countries, the then Nigérien aristocracy was adamantly against sending their children to French schools, fearing that they would become hostages of the colonial power, or see them lose their faith in the religion they have passed on to them. In most cases, this reason has led them to send children of their subjects in place of their own.

This section would be incomplete if we did not mention that the French and the English colonial systems alike had throughout their time span undertaken a policy of elite formation. This is supported by the fact that only a small number of high status secondary schools were built. Evidence of such a colonial policy is provided by Crowdwer (1968:383-4) (quoted in Blackmore and Cooksey, 1981:45); although long, we report it *inextenso* because in failing to do so we will not capture all its significance:

> These schools were designed to attract the most able children (or those from the wealthiest families), provide boarding facilities which should develop a sense of common identity amongst the pupils, and enter them for metropolitan examinations. The policy paid off; a large number of political leaders, and top civil servants eventually emerged from these schools. [...] An examination of the list of graduates of the William Ponty school [Dakar] shows that on or just before independence the following graduates were at the head of French-speaking West African governments: Modibo Keita, President of the Republic of Mali; Mamadou Dia, Prime Minister of Senegal; Hubert Maga, President of Dahomey; Ouezzin Coulibaly, Prime Minister of Upper Volta...; Felix Houphouet-Boigny, President of Ivory Coast; Djibo Bakary, Prime Minister of Niger; [Diori Hamani, President of Niger; Boubou Hama, President of the National Assembly]; only Guinea and Mauritania did not have a President or a Prime Minister educated at this school. Similarly, for Northern Nigeria the Katsina

> College now Government College, Zaria, has a school roll that include the Premier, the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Education, the federal Prime Minister and three federal Ministers, the leader of the opposition in the North...

Finally, it should be pointed out that neither the French nor the English were as assimilationist or adaptionist as they claimed to be. As hinted earlier only few elites were trained. In effect, as Blackmore & Cooksey (1981:36) note, 'the first grammar school was not established in French West Africa until 1928, and the first university (Dakar) opened in 1958.' He also notes that contrary to French-speaking Africa, English speaking Africa had secondary schools long before 1900 (Nigeria, Gold Coast and Sierra Leone). The first university graduates of Fourah Bay College (Sierra Leone) were conferred their degrees in 1878.

2.4.3 Towards the Expansion of Formal Education

A report dated December 2, 1902 signed by Captain H. Salaman reveals that in 1901 no school existed in Niamey (Koudizé 1991:11) although some literature pointed out that the first school was built in Doulsou (Ayérou) in Western Niger in 1898. In the Côte d' Ivoire for instance, the first primary school was created by Verdier in 1822 (Gbari 1991:9) not to mention the case of Senegal which had its first primary school in 1818. The following lines are excerpts from one of the captivating lectures delivered at I.N.D.R.A.P, in 1978 by Pr André Salifou, historian and educationist.

He noted that in August 1902 Captain Salaman, officer in charge of the *Cercle Djerma* built the first professional school in Niamey, a small locality which will – after Zinder – become in 1926 the capital of Niger. Unfortunately, this school did not last long which led the colonial administration to opt for a sensitization of the Nigérien people, starting with the Kings and their *entourage*. The Djermakoye,

King of Dosso, was constantly used as a reference for he already had a son at the *Ecole des Fils de Chefs* of Kayes (in Mali Republic). However, the sensitization will be long, and difficult to bear fruit for people identified the new form of education with the loss of their moral values, traditions and personalities.

Pr Salifou also pointed out that in 1903 7 schools were built: 4 in the *Cercle de Niamey* and the three others in Tessaoua, Tahoua and Zinder. Since there was no *Ecole régionale* in Niger at that time, Nigérien pupils had to be sent to Tombouctou (in the Mali Republic), a decision that pupils' parents vehemently opposed. This refusal of parents to send their children to remote regions, and what is more to unknown countries (Mali, Senegal) caused the French Governor based in Niamey to open, in 1911-1912, the first *Ecole régionale* of Niger in Zinder.

It can be said without any risk of being mistaken that Niger is one of the countries where the French succeeded the least in promoting education. There are a number of reasons for this; besides the religious reasons and the opposition of the people, it should be added that there were 9000 villages scattered across an area which is twice as big as France itself. This is a serious problem in a country where means of transport were scarce, the economy mainly based on agriculture, and where the circulation of information remained insignificant. The following lines are excerpts from new academic year reports 1948-1949 written by two teachers in different regions of Niger (in Salifou,1989:265) and illustrate the extent to which people were reluctant to accept formal education:

> **La rentrée des classes à Gothèye s'est effectuée dans bien de difficultés. Cela est dû à l'incomprehension assez prononcée de la population (...). Aucun effort de la part du chef de village pour réunir les enfants d'âge scolaire (...). Je parcours le village, invitant les parents à envoyer leurs enfants; c'est à peine si on m'écoute (Martin Combary, teacher at Gothèye in Western Niger).**

The next report by Barkiré Halidou, teacher in Guidimouni (Eastern Niger)

reads as follows:

> La rentrée à Guidimouni a été énormément retardée par la difficulté de recrutement. De la date de mon arrivée à Guidimouni au 16 janvier, je n'ai pu recruter que 38 élèves, malgré l'intervention de monsieur le Gouverneur.

In a nutshell, people opposed formal education because not only was it considered as the school of *Kafirai*, i.e non believers, capable of putting children off the inherited track, but also because they could not see the immediate benefits of schooling. It should also be said that, this education was not initially linked to the development of the country, not to mention that in that part of Africa the more children a person had, the more people s/he had to work on the farm, the more respected s/he was. Thus to send a child to school was synonymous with a great loss: culturally, religiously, and manpower-wise.

2.5 The Colonial Legacy

As mentioned in the previous section, the French education system was very *élitiste*. Unlike Senegal, for instance, where the first lycée was built in 1928, Niger had its first Lycée (*Classique et Moderne*) in 1954. Table 2.4 shows that altogether 531 students attended that Lycée (from 1954 to 1960) which in 1960 became the Lycée National du Niger, then Lycée Issa Korombé (name of a famous warrior). At the time of independence, the number of national engineers, or medical doctors, secondary school teachers was very insignificant. Tables 2.5, 2.6, 2.7 give more details about the schools and their populations in 1961, i.e one year after independence.

In 1961, the school population for both primary and secondary education amounted to 28,019 pupils, including 8,064 girls, or 28 per cent of the school population. The schooling rate was estimated as ranging between 4.6 per cent and

Table 2.4 — Lycée National and Normal Schools Population Before Independence. (Van Waeyenberghe 1961:27)

Period	L.N Niamey	C.N Tahoua	C.N Zinder	C.N Tillabéry	Total
1/1/54	166	111	–	–	277
1/1/55	192	113	–	–	305
1/1/56	238	133	–	–	371
1/1/57	266	153	–	–	418
1/1/58	317	158	71	–	526
1/1/59	434	162	112	–	708
1/1/60	531	177	158	30	896
1/1/61	597	169	213	60	1039

5.7 cent. Secondary and technical schools as well as private schools were located in urban areas as shown in the table (2.6) below (Waeyenberghe 1961:19).

In January 1961 only 100 Nigérien students were furthering their studies in higher education institutions. Amongst these, 47 were being trained in France and 53 in various African Universities. Another point worth mentioning is that only 12 of these students were intended for secondary education while 10 of them were to go to primary education and 17 for technical education (Waeyenberghe 1961:21).

Table 2.5 — Cours Complémentaires Population in 1961-1962. Waeyenberghe (*ibid*)

Period	Tahoua	Maradi	Niamey	Zinder	Mainé	Agadez	Dosso	Total
1/1/60	34	54	20	36				144
1/1/61	54	71	43	62	25	22	43	320
Total	88	125	63	98	25	22	43	464

Primary school pupils during recreation

Cours Préparatoire pupils

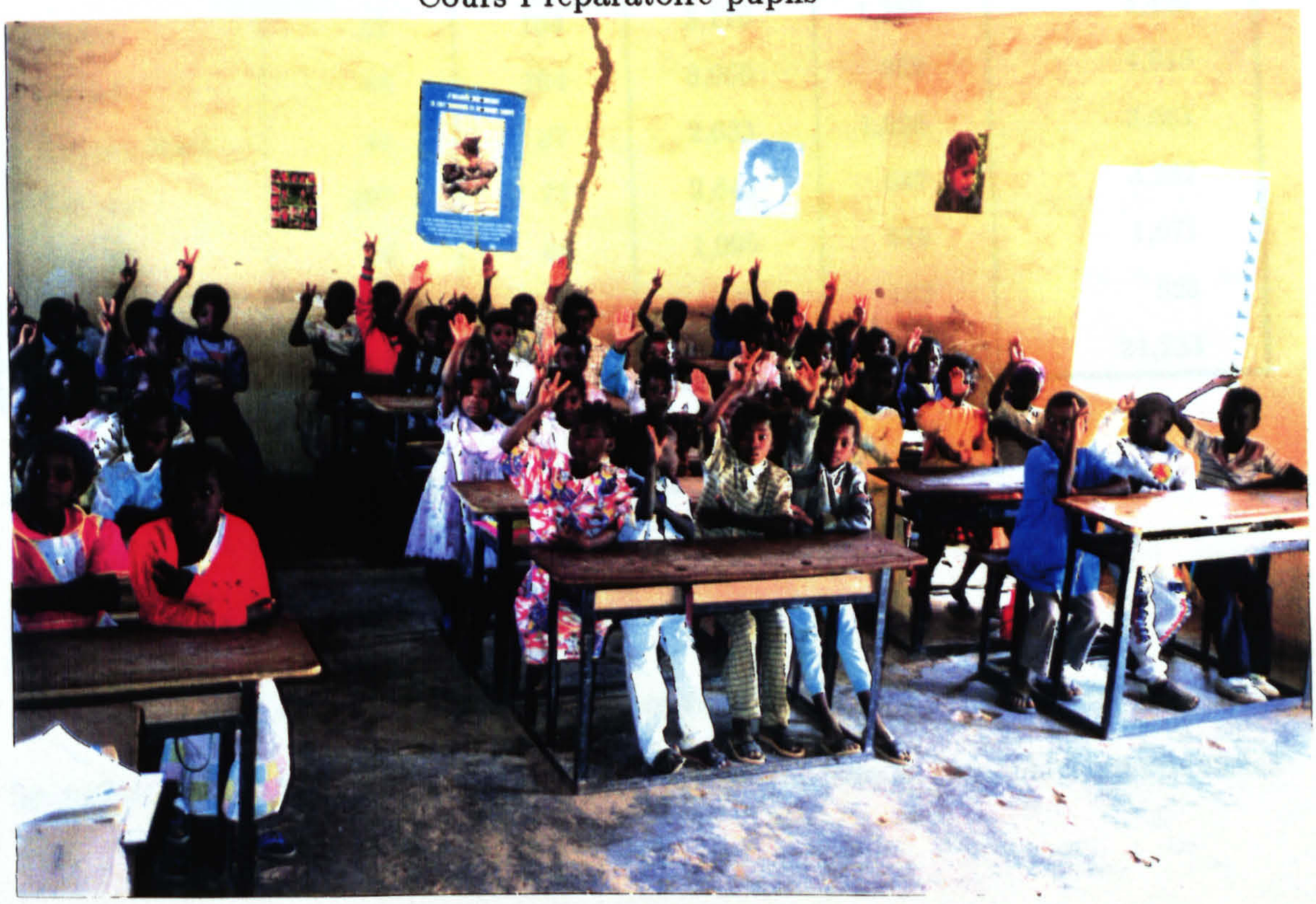


Table 2.6 — Pre/Primary, Secondary, Technical and Higher Education in January 1961

Levels of Education	Male	Female	Total
Pre-Primary Education	287	232	419
Primary Education	18,719	7,790	26,609
Secondary Education	1,085	274	1,359
Technical Education	61	None	61
Higher Education	100	—	100
Total	20,252	8,296	28,548

Table 2.7 — State Pri2mary Schools Situation a Year After Independence

Regions	School	Class	Boys	Girls	Total Pupils
Niamey Sud	50	146	4,325	2,014	6,339
Zinder	52	104	3,170	1,259	4,429
Maradi	48	104	3,066	952	4,018
Niamey Nord	44	87	2,633	1,028	3,661
Tahoua	50*	77	2,640	647	3,287
Manga	16	44	1,095	576	1,671
Agadez	17	29	666	162	828
Total	277	591	17,595	6,638	24,233

2.6 The Current Education System

2.6.1 Educational Policies

As strange as it may seem, there does not exist a ratified document encapsulating the national education policies *per se*, as is the case in some African countries

such as Benin, Senegal or Nigeria. In the latter country, for example, the Federal Ministry of Information (1977:3-35) produced the Federal Republic of Nigeria National Policy on Education, a document sold at the affordable price of 50 kobo. In other words, anybody interested in the system may get hold of a copy and find out what the country's policies are in terms of: (1) the philosophy of Nigerian education, (2) pre-primary education, (3) primary education, (4) secondary education, (5) higher and professional education, (6) technical education, (7) adult and non-formal education, (8) special education, (9) teacher education, (10) educational services, and finally (11) administration, planning and financing of education.

This does not mean that decisions are taken haphazardly in the Ministry. First, it should be noted that presidential decrees such as the 85/236/PCMS/MEN/ES/R decree (which determines the attributions of the Minister), and ministerial *arrêtés* are the frameworks within which ministry officials, inspectors, headmasters, teachers and local authorities operate. The setback is that only a few people are aware of their existence and of the value of their contents. Secondly, there do exist here and there, papers from the various national seminars, conferences, debates on education dealing with most of the 11 areas mentioned above. These documents which could have (at least) been efficiently used to design a National Policy on Education brochure, are unfortunately in many cases 'forgotten' in cupboards and drawers.

Again, the point we are trying to make is that (a) these official decrees and *arrêtés* do not cover all the educational issues, (b) only very few people know about them, (c) more seriously, that there exist many grey areas which need to be examined and clearly defined. It is not a secret to anybody involved in teaching – for it has been decried during various seminars, conferences and debates – that

(1) the ends of formal education are still blurred, (2) the policies regarding private schools, Franco-Arab schools, special schools are almost non-existant, (3) there is an absence of a sound national policy in terms of research. All these problems relating to the national policy on education have recently been brought to light by the National Conference, as demonstrated by the following lines:

> [1] L'absence de politique conséquente en matière d'éducation, des moyens adéquats de sa mise en oeuvre est palliée par de mesures imposées par les circonstances. Le but est de parer au plus pressé, de réagir face aux urgences, de trouver une solution à des impératifs extra-éducatifs. L'illustration en est que les mesures peuvent être motivées par l'urgence ou la volonté de solutionner des problèmes extra-scolaires. Des situations ambigues y sont maintenues, peut-être à dessein (National Conference Report on Education, 1991:6).

> [2] Les écoles spécialisées sont nées à cause des financements extérieurs et l'on ne s'est jamais préoccupé de leur cadre institutionnel (National Conference Report on Education, (*ibid.*).

> [3] Les établissements du technique et professionnel relèvent des ministères de tutelle différents parce qu'il y a des intérêts des administrations de tutelle pour ne pas dire de leurs responsables du moment (National Conference Report on Education 1991, (*ibid.*).

Another problem in line with the national policy on education may find its source in the fact that Ministers in most cases stay in office for a short time. Thus, some did not even have the time to know their near collaborators, let alone, work out a coherent national policy on education. In addition, new ministers often appoint new technicians and new counsellors, which is obviously not always beneficial. This view is also shared by Hamidou (1991:22-3) who gives the following concrete evidence:

> ... Un exemple édifiant: de 1960 à 1991, dix sept (17) ministres se sont succédés à la tête du Département de l'Education Nationale. Un seul d'entre eux est resté dix (10) ans, du 25 juin 1963 au 17 août 1972. Les seize (16) autres se partagent vingt et un (21) ans, soit une durée moyenne de 15 mois. Certains n'ont même pas eu le temps de connaître leurs collaborateurs les plus proches. Ceux d'entre eux qui sont restés plus d'un an ont pu faire des tournées, rencontrer et discuter avec les hommes du terrain. Malheureusement, ils sont repartis très tôt avec leurs idées et leurs projets empreints de bonnes intentions pour l'école nigérienne. Comment peut-on aspirer à

> une politique éducative cohérente avec une telle valse de ministres entrainant le plus souvent le changement des cadres de conception?

As a conclusion it can be said that in Niger the pillars on which rest the education policy are: free education for all and democratisation of education. However, as to how this is achieved, remains the major problem.

2.6.2 Administrative Organization

Like the French education system, the Nigérien system is highly centralized. Teaching methods, teacher education, school staffing, curricula, financing, every aspect of schooling is controlled by the Ministry of Education at all levels, in private as well as in state schools. Since independence, the Ministry has had many designations. It was once known as the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, then as Ministry of National Education, Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Technology and National Education, Ministry of Education and Professional Education, as if higher education and professional education are not part of education *per se*.

Known today as the Ministry of National Education and Research, its administrative system is subdivided into two major parts:

- the central administration which comprises the cabinet of the Minister and that of the Secretary of State, the Secretary General and the Assistant Secretary General Offices, 12 Departments (amongst which those of Secondary and Technical Education, Pre-Primary Education and Primary Education, Higher Education, Research and Technology, Planning); to these departments must be added national institutes such as I.N.D.R.A.P. (the National Institute for Educational Research) and I.R.S.H. (the Institute of Research in Social Sci-

ences) (cf flow chart Appendix F). All Heads of the central administration are appointed by presidential decree on the proposal of the Minister and Secretary of State.

- the regional administration has been established to enable regions to 'run' their schools. Inspectors for primary and secondary education have been empowered by the Ministry to (a) make sure that the curriculum is followed by all concerned, (b) cater for the training of teachers, (c) post teachers when necessary (d) reinforce the decisions coming from the central administration.

As might be gathered the major problem which arises from such an administrative structure is the time wasted by the education consumers because of the multifarous labyrinths they have to encounter before resolving any educational matter. Another flaw is the lack of circulation of information between the various departments. An illustrative example would the striking lack of cohesion between the statistical data given, let us say by the D.E.P. (Department of Planning) and most of the departments on a given matter.

2.6.3 Financing Education in Niger

Because of the centralized structure of the Ministry, the commitment to free education for all and the democratization of education, and mostly because of the blurred educational policy – so far and probably until otherwise proven by the country's economic failure – the heavy burden of financing every aspect of education falls on the state. Education is indeed not only **free** from primary to University, but also entitles many of its beneficiaries to stipends. Thus, the state is in charge of (1) building of schools, (2) providing them with the appropriate equipment (furniture, textbooks, notebooks, not to mention items such as rubbers

or pencils), (3) housing the teaching staff (teachers who are not housed by the state are paid monthly accommodation fees according to their professional status) (4) paying the salaries of all the *cadres* and the plethoric *non cadres* of the Ministry (5) subsidizing private schools, (6) paying students stipends and (7) day to day running costs for utilities. Unfortunately, the state today is like a cow which is heavily milked and to which no substantial food is provided. The result is not difficult to imagine – in the long run the cow will not be in a position to produce milk, worse, it might even cease to exist.

Because of what has been said so far, the budget of the Ministry of Education is one of the most important – if not the most important, compared with the shares allocated to other Ministries. For instance, in 1981 it was 20.34% of the national budget and then steadily declined to 16.10% in 1986, 13.80% in 1987, 13.10% in 1988, and finally was increased to 14.20% in 1989, and 14.86% in 1990 (Annuaire des Statistiques du M.E.N., 1990:2).

This said, it is generally agreed that no country can claim to have all the resources its educational system needs to function efficiently. In effect, whatever the economic power of a country it needs the wit and the financial contribution of all its sons and daughters to educate younger generations. And Niger is no exception, for it is in the interest of nobody, to fold their arms and watch the education 'boat' sink.

2.6.4 A Synoptic Description of the System

As already hinted, the steps of the educational ladder in Niger and in most French-speaking countries of West Africa are in many respects similar to the French model. The educational system is subdivided into three distinct levels: pre-primary

and primary, secondary (lower and upper secondary) and higher education. For the sake of conciseness and also because the study is mostly centred on secondary education, only the last two levels of the education system will be discussed at length.

Schooling starts in kindergartens commonly known as *jardins d'enfants* from the age of 4 and continues to the age of 6. It is noteworthy that, in Niger, pre-primary education was first established in 1948 by Catholic Missionaries, but it was not until 1977 that it became institutionalized. Today, three major criticisms may be lodged against pre-primary education: (1) nursery schools are only found in urban areas, which means that they are undemocratic; (2) enrolment is subordinated to a yearly entrance fee approximately amounting to 40 pounds sterling, a sum which is not within the reach of every parent; (3) the lack of adequately trained teachers.

For the vast majority, primary education starts at the age of 7 and lasts 6 years, unlike in France where children spend 5 years at this level of the education system. This difference between the two systems is quite obvious. In effect, at the age of 6-7, French, the official language and medium of instruction, is *terra incognita* for most of children. This situation has led the colonial educationists and politicians to add one year to the primary schooling span in Niger. Since then primary education has consisted of a two year preparatory (*Cours Préparatoires 1ère et 2ème Années*), followed by a two year elementary (*Cours Elémentaires 1ère et 2ème Années*) and finally a two year middle-grade cycle.

This part of the educational system is sanctioned by the C.E.P.D. (*Certificat d'Etudes Primaires Elémentaires*) which allows the best pupil holders of that certificate to embark on secondary education. The National Conference Report

on Education (1991:2-3) revealed that in 1985 out of 63,866 pupils enrolled for primary education in *Cours Préparatoire 1ère Année* only 15,079 (23.8%) were admitted to 6ème (the first form of secondary schools), the remaining 48,787 were either expelled from school or had to repeat a class.

Finally, the central purpose of primary education in developing countries – including Niger is twofold, as notes Lockheed (*et al.* 1990:2), that is,

> to produce a literate and numerate population and to lay the groundwork for further education.

As for the next step of the education system, i.e secondary education it comprises two distinct yet complementary cycles: the first cycle or C.E.G. (*Collège d'Enseignement Général*) (lower secondary) and the second cycle or Lycées (upper secondary). Studies last 4 years in the 1st cycle and 3 in the second cycle at the end of which students take the B.E.P.C. (*Brevet d'Etudes du Premier Cycle*) and the *Baccalauréat*, respectively (*vide infra*).

Holders of that first secondary school degree (i.e B.E.P.C.) are oriented by a national committee to either lycées to further their secondary education, or to technical schools (Lycé Technique Maradi, Lycée d'Enseignement Professionnel, Ecole des Mines de l'Aïr (E.M.A.I.R.) or professional schools in Niger (E.N.I.C.A.S., C.N.I.P.T., E.N., E.N.A. etc.) or abroad.

Students oriented to lycées have three options: to prepare in three years either (1) the *Baccalauréat* A (Letters, Humanities) or (2) the *Baccalauréat* C (Mathematics and Physics) or (3) the *Baccalauréat* D (Mathematics and Biology). Holders of the *Baccalauréat* are entitled to further their studies at the University Abdou Moumouni of Niamey, the University Islamic of Say (Niger) and at other European or American Universities.

Higher education, the last step of the system, is within the reach of all those who have passed the *Baccalauréat* examination, for in Niger, until otherwise stated, university education is a 'right not a privilege'.

Because (a) the present work lays the emphasis on secondary education, and (b) for the sake of conciseness, only the last two parts of the education system will be summarily dealt with in the following sections.

2.6.5 Secondary Education

2.6.5.1 Development of Secondary Education

Of the three major subdivisions of the Nigérien education system, secondary and higher education are the least developed for in 1990 the schooling rate was estimated at 27.5% for primary education, 8.1% for secondary education and less than 5% for higher education. The reasons for this are obvious (given what has been discussed on pre-colonial education in Niger) and it would be repititious to develop them to justify these low figures. In Côte d'Ivoire for instance, the situation is completely different, for discussing the schooling rate in his country Gbari wrote:

> On independence which was achieved in 1960 [as in Niger], the schooling rate, as far as Secondary Education is concerned, was 10%. Education was given top priority and schooling rate soars to 75% in 1980 (Gbari 1991:10).

Indeed, education was given top priority in Niger as well, following the decision taken in Addis Abbaba (Ethiopia) in 1961 by African Ministers of Education who opted for Universal Education leading to free and compulsory Education for all by 1980. They also agreed, by the end of 1980, to work out ways and means that would enable 30% of primary school pupils to further their education in secondary schools, and 20% of secondary school students to continue to higher education.

Today, 12 years have elapsed after the deadline set in Addis Abbaba, and yet the noble objectives referred to above are still not achieved in many African countries and in Niger in particular. This, however does not entail that the system is stagnant and that nothing positive has been fulfilled.

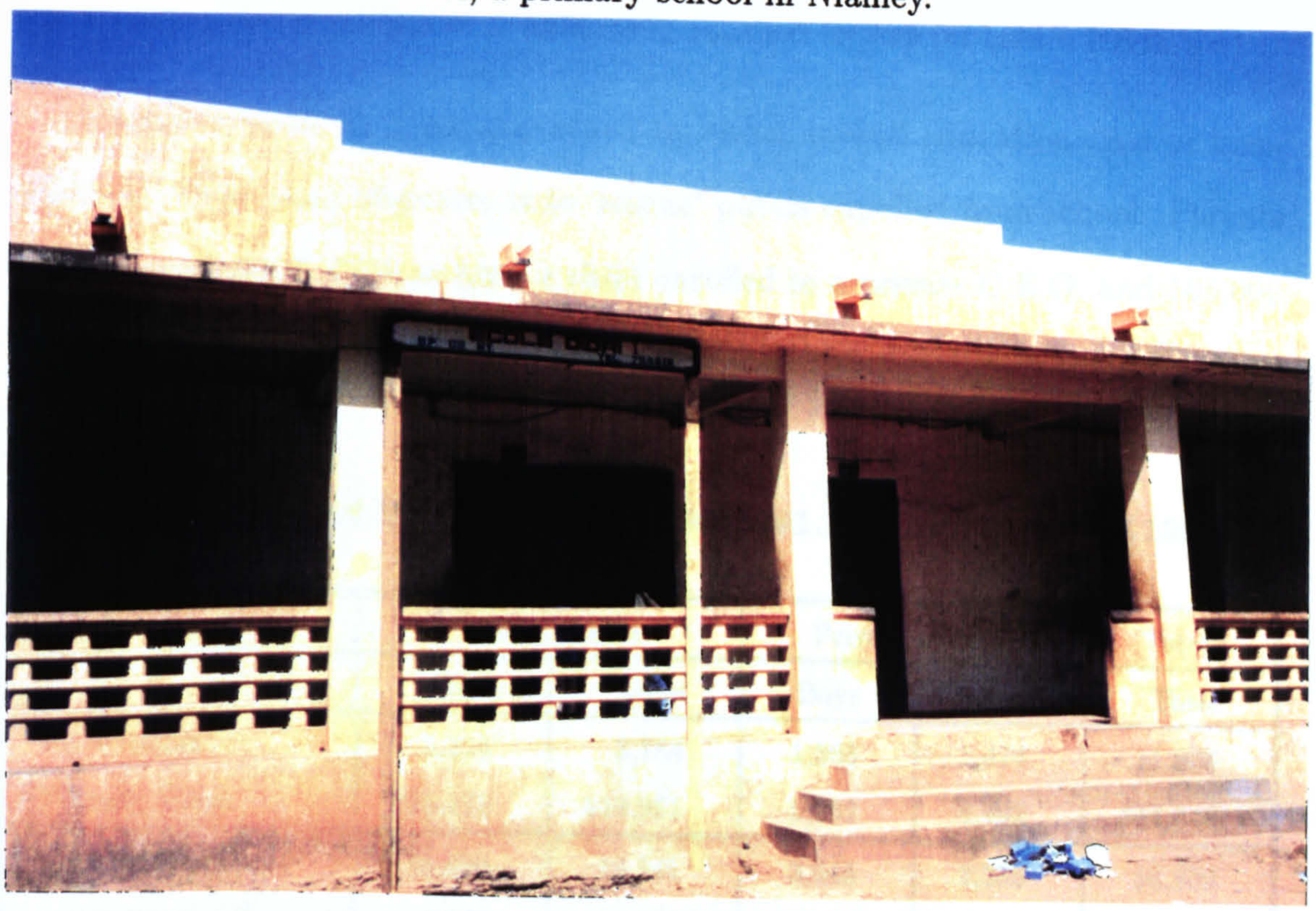
Table 2.8 — School Infrastructures on November 15, 1989.

(D.E.P./M.E.N. 1991:8)

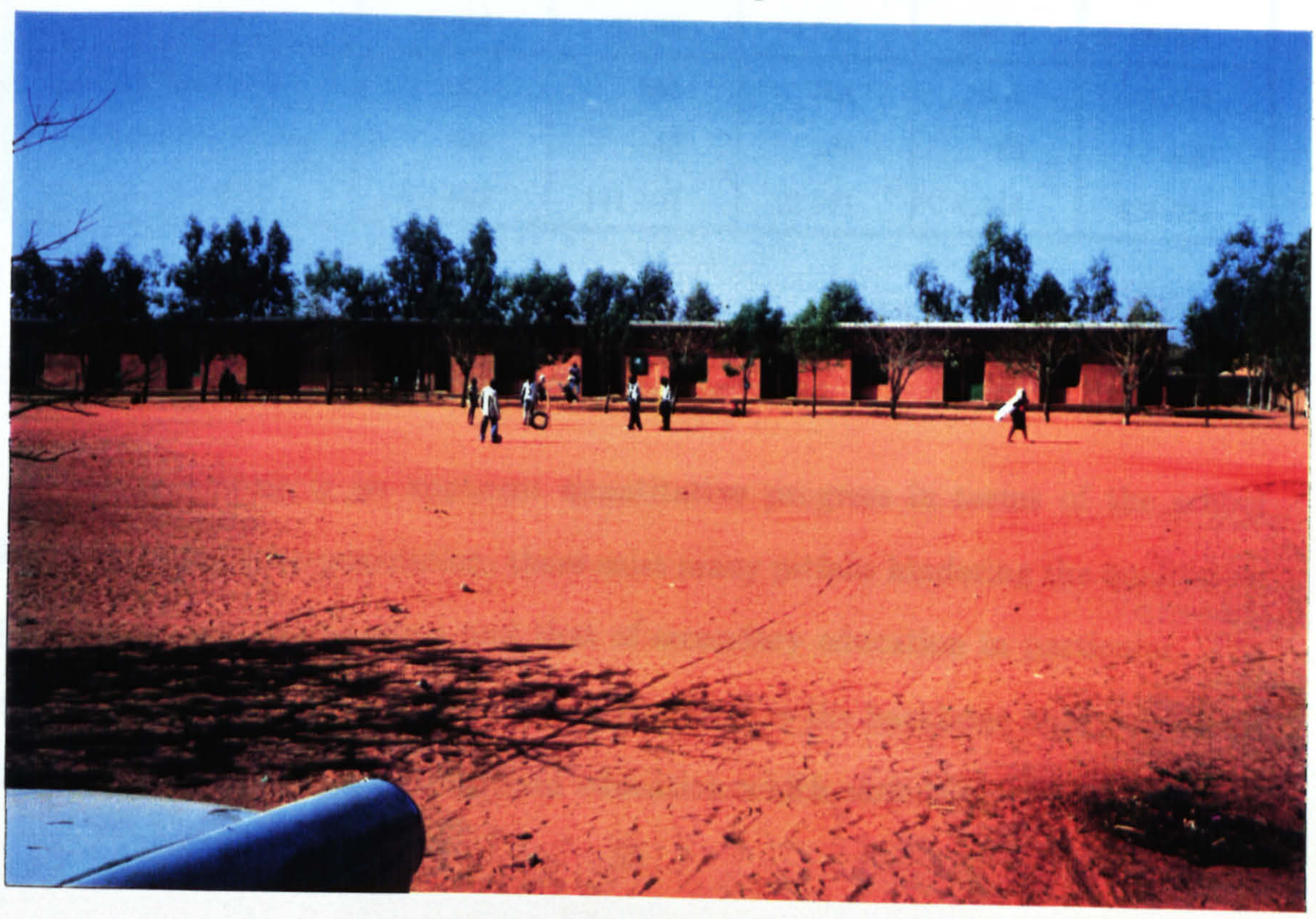
Education Level	State Schools	Private Schools	Total
Pre-Primary	53	18	71
Primary	2174	41	2215
1st Cycle/C.E.G	83	20	103
2nd Cycle/Lycée	11	9	20
Total Second. Ed.	94	29	123
Teacher Tr.Sch	4*	NA	4
Technical Ed.	1**	1	2
Overall Situation	2420	118	2538

The fact of the matter is that, in terms of educational development a great deal has certainly been achieved, if we compare what was achieved in 60 years of colonial rule and what has been done in the post independence period. Up to 1960, the independence year, there was only one lycée classique (grammar school) comprising the first and second cycles for the whole country, 3 teacher training schools (in Tahoua, Tillabery and Zinder) and 3 *Cours Complémentaires* (Maradi, Niamey, Zinder) currently known as C.E.G. Thus, on independence Niger inherited from the colonial power 8 secondary schools attended by 1,040 students. During the same period, the schooling rate for secondary education was inferior to 1%. Thirty years later, i.e half of the time that colonization lasted in Niger, the country

Ecole Diori, a primary school in Niamey.



A typical C.E.G in Niger.



counted 103 state and private C.E.G.s, 20 state and private Lycées, 4 teacher training schools and one technical school, not to mention the school population which during the academic year 1990-1991 reached 68,799 (cf tables 2.8 & 2.9).

Private schools in Niger are owned by either retired educationalists or businessmen. Their main objective is to 'rescue' pupils expelled from school. Parents yearly pay 33,000 F CFA to have a child enrolled in a private C.E.G. and 105,000 F CFA (1 FF = 50 F CFA) in a private Lycée.

Table 2.9 — School Population in 1990-1991. D.E.P./M.E.N. (1991:7)

Level of Education	State Schools		Private Schools		Total
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Total
Pre-Primary	4,215	3,784	1,565	1,474	11,038
Primary Educ.	215,173	119,921	5,262	4,492	344,848
1st Cycle Sec.Ed.	35,690	15,141	3,645	2,333	56,809
2nd Cycle Sec.Ed.	6,178	1,555	1,284	545	9,562
Total Sec. Ed.	41,868	16,696	4,929	2,878	66,371
Teacher Train.Sch.	917	661	NA	NA	1,578
Technical Education	490	45	285	30	850
Overall Situation	262,663	141,107	12,041	8,874	424,685

2.6.5.2 Some Problems of Secondary Education

Though there is an apparent quantitative progress in terms of the school buildings and school population, there exist many pitfalls hindering the qualitative progress of the whole system and that of secondary education in particular. The major contradiction which is found in the system is the backbone policy on which the whole system rests, i.e universal education which seriously conflicts with the

'elitist' trends embodied in the system. It is indeed quite impossible to expect Free Education for All to bear fruit while all along the education system there exist 'bottle neck situations / hurdles' that gives rise to low standards and a high proportion of drop-outs. This strategy is described by Coombs (1968:31) in these terms:

> In this way, elementary education serves to screen the academically bright, the students in secondary and higher education can be held down to a manageable number, and quality can be more maintained. This policy of competitive selectivity and promotion, based on individual academic performances, seems at first glance to be fair and democratic. It makes the examination the impartial arbiter of who will continue into secondary and higher education; it accepts the 'ablest' and ruthlessly rejects the rest, thereby, incidentally, stamping more young people with the identifying mark of 'failure' than 'success'.

In 1988 for instance, the annual results for the first cycle are as follows:

- In *sixième* the first form of secondary school 64% of the students succeeded in being admitted in 5ème, while 24% stayed down and 12% were expelled or abandoned.

- *Cinquième*: 72% obtained the passing grade (10/20), 16% were allowed to repeat that class, and 12% were expelled or abandoned.

- *Quatrième*: 64% succeeded to reach the *troisième* class, while 18% stayed down and the remaining 18% were either expelled or abandoned.

- *Troisième*: less than half of the students, i.e 40% managed to obtain their B.E.P.C. certificate, 25% were allowed to repeat the *troisième* class and 35% were expelled. Indeed, that is where the problems start because the system did not prepare them to fit in their community, the reality being that most of them do not want to go back to the land, nor can they obtain a job that they have been longing for for years.

- In the second cycle of secondary education the results are quite the same as those mentioned above. In 1988, less than half of the students obtained their *Baccalauréat*, that is, 38.3%.

In effect, the school regulations are set in such a way that only the bright students can complete their education, not to mention the inequality of chances relating to enrolment and success at school about which the National Conference Committee on Education notes the following:

> Trente ans après, en dépit d'investissements énormes en infrastructures scolaires, le taux est encore largement bas et des régions ne sont toujours pas couvertes. Le déséquilibre entre les centres urbains (jusqu'à 40% de scolarisation) et les zones rurales ne fait que s' amplifier [...]. S'agissant de l'inégalité des chance d'accès à l'éducation entre les filles et les garçons, elle est visible dès le primaire. (Rapport sur l' Education/Conférence Nationale 1991:4).

Table 2.10 — The Nigérien Teaching Force in 1989-1990.

(D.E.P./M.E.N. 1991:9)

Level of Education	State			Private			Overall
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	
Pre-Primary	NA	209	209	NA	68	68	277
Primary	5601	2643	8244	147	71	218	8462
1st Cycle Sec.	1385	348	1733	270	26	296	2029
2nd Cycle Sec.	395	63	458	77	11	88	546
Total Sec.Ed.	1780	411	2191	347	37	384	2575
Teacher Tr. Sch.	65	12	77	NA	NA	NA	77
Technical	58	5	63	44	11	55	118
Total	9284	3691	12975	885	224	1109	14084

Another problem hindering the efficiency of secondary education is the lack of people in charge of teacher education, *viz.* Pedagogical Advisers and Inspectors.

It should be said in passing that from 1965 to 1972 secondary education was supervised by a single person, who was at the same time the *Inspecteur d'Académie*, the Director for Secondary Education and Technical Consellor of the Minister of Education (Rapport du Séminaire National de Réflexion sur la Réforme de l' Enseignement). Since then only a handful of inspectors have been trained. The last straw which broke the camel's back occurred in 1985/86 when a 'presidential decree' put an end to the training the of Pedagogical Advisers at the Faculty of Pedagogy. This situation which lasted for a couple of years has in many respects slowed down the development of teacher education in Niger. Today, not only is the need for subject inspectors felt, but also the administrative and academic reorganization of the secondary education department itself.

The class size is also a parameter to refer to when discussing secondary education in Niger. At the national level, the average size of a class is 40. However, this figure may vary according to regions. Thus, one may come across classes of 70 pupils in urban areas and classes of less than 25 in rural areas. Because only few students manage to 'cling' to scientific classes, it is common to see classes of Terminale C with less than 10 students while in Terminale A students are numbered in tens. As for the teacher-pupil ratio it was 1 teacher to 38 pupils for the whole country in 1988. (Population et Dévelopement CTIP 1990:24-5).

2.6.5.3 An Overview of Higher Education

As is obvious, higher education in Niger was non existent in Niger even long after independence. The development of primary and secondary education may partly justify this delay.

The *Centre d'Enseignement Supérieur* which was the higher education school

Table 2.11 — Specifications About State Secondary School Teachers.

D.E.P/M.E.N 1991:230 *bis*

Level of Training	Nationals			Non Nationals			Total		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Prof. Agrégé *	0	0	0	2	1	3	2	1	3
Ch. d'Enseign. *	317	82	453	61	11	75	435	93	528
Other Univ. Degr	121	14	135	24	9	33	145	23	168
Prof. de C.E.G	702	178	880	9	1	10	711	179	890
Incomplete Train.	31	1	32	NA	NA	NA	31	1	32
Phys.Ed.Teachers	113	12	125	NA	NA	NA	113	12	125
Domestic.Science	NA	28	28	NA	NA	NA	NA	28	28
Instituteurs *	333	90	423	NA	NA	NA	333	90	423
Bac Holders	26	4	30	NA	NA	NA	26	4	30
Total	1716	396	2112	125	27	152	1841	423	2264

(*) **Professeur Agrégé**: a teacher who has successfully passed 'a competitive Civil Service examination, of a very high academic standard, prepared in the universities and the *Ecoles Normales Supérieures*' (British Council, 1991:304).

(*) **Chargé d' Enseignement**: C.E.G. or Lycée teacher holder of a *Licence* or a *Maîtrise*, two university degrees obtained after 3 and 4 years, respectively.

(*) **Instituteur**: Primary school teacher holder of the *Certificat d'Aptitude Pédagogique* (C.A.P.), a teaching qualification.

of the country became the University of Niamey in September 1971; today it is known as the University Abdou Moumouni (the late Nigérien scientist and educationist). For the sake of comparison, we should point out that the University of Dakar was established in 1957, the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* of Abidjan in 1967-

1968, which is not that disconcerting given the fact that formal education took roots in Senegal long before it was established in Niger. Another higher education establishment is the Islamic University of Say which caters for a few hundred students.

Table 2.12 — Development of Niamey University From 1971 to 1988: Students & Faculties. M.E.S.R.T/Université de Niamey 1988:38

Year	Faculty Of						Total	Progression %
	Sc.	Ed.	Agro.	Arts/Soc.Sc	Med.	Econ/Law	Total	%
1971-72	83	20	–	–	–	–	103	–
1972-73	199	22	–	–	–	–	221	114
1973-74	215	39	4	24	–	–	282	27
1974-75	221	81	15	48	35	–	400	41
1975-76	319	86	24	71	49	–	549	37
1976-77	401	131	25	144	70	–	771	40
1977-78	350	139	39	166	109	–	803	4
1978-79	309	195	58	202	162	–	926	15
1979-80	273	226	69	220	174	–	962	3
1980-81	341	276	86	293	213	241	1,480	53
1981-82	401	284	45	443	241	417	1,831	23
1982-83	432	293	52	558	276	556	2,167	13
1983-84	455	326	55	645	282	687	2,450	8
1984-85	522	351	67	869	267	785	2,661	8
1985-86	579	271	41	1,060	308	784	3,043	14
1986-87	674	307	59	1,198	311	758	3,257	6
1987-88	632	334	80	1,428	348	718	3,541	8

The Report of the *Journées de Réfexion sur l'Université de Niamey* (1988:25) points out that since 1980 there has been a steady growth of 16% and 11% in the

I.N.D.R.A.P, the Institute for Educational Research

The Faculty of Pedagogy

student and teacher population respectively, and that the university will have 20,909 students and 797 teachers by the year 2000. But, already the University cannot afford to offer a place for each new *Baccalauréat* holder for the capacity of the 6 faculties is of 1000 students. For instance in June 1988, there were 1398 Nigérien students who successfully passed the Baccalauréat exam. The problem of place shortage in the first year still remains an unsolved handicap.

Table 2.13 — Niamey University Teaching Staff From 1983 to 1988.

M.E.S.R.T/Université de Niamey 1988:39

Teaching Staff	1983-84	1984-85	1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
Permanent Staff	198	312	224	133	247
Part-time Staff	100	–	94	101	62
Visiting Lecturers	24	–	25	58	–

The aforementioned seminar came to the conclusion that by and large the programmes are efficient which is translated into the fact that Nigérien students admitted to other universities in Africa, Europe or the United States have honoured the University of Niamey through their good performances. The Report explains this in these terms:

> Le programme d'enseignement de l'Université de Niamey n'est pas déficient. Au contraire, les étudiants nigériens évoluant dans les universités étrangères (Afrique Noire et Blanche, Europe, Amérique...) ont fait, et continuent de faire honneur à notre institution. Toutefois, ce programme sera réamenagé pour tenir compte de défis modernes (défis techniques, économiques, écologiques, démographiques, culturels...) et pour mieux répondre à nos besoins (MESRT/Université de Niamey, 1989).

2.6.6 Girls' Education

Education is generally perceived as 'a cornerstone of economic growth and social development and a principal means of improving the welfare of individuals'

(Lockheed *et al.* 1990:2). Nowhere in the world could this major objective of education be achieved without the full contribution of women. Niger is no exception to this because not only do they outnumber males, but above all, are in many respects the pillars of the society, as rightly explained by Evans (1990:32):

> Women in some societies [including thoses of Niger] are the providers of food, fuel, water, and the family income - the sustainers and developers of their families, communities, and countries. As such, the fate of women can be a critical determinant of the fate of whole societies.

What would then be the use of having only the head of the family, i.e the husband educated while the wife who is in charge of the health, the education of children, the welfare of the entire family is not educated?

The above mentioned reasons and other considerations such as equal opportunity for all (irrespective of religion, ethnicity, region, and sex in particular) have led us to treat girls' education separately. Our aim is to discuss whether girls and boys have equal opportunities, as stipulated by the abrogated Constitution and other official texts.

Finally, in order to shed light on the present state of girls' education in Niger, we have found it useful to start with a briefing relating to the main sources of gender disparities.

2.6.6.1 Sources of Gender Disparities

In Niger, irrespective of region and social class, people opposed girls' education in the period prior to the 1960s. For instance, it took *Ecole Birni* in Zinder (one of the first schools in the country) almost half a century - from 1904 to 1957 - before its first female student, Rakia Mani, embarked on secondary education at the *Cours Normal* of the same locality (Inné, 1991).

Three main reasons may be advanced to explain the obstacles to the schooling of girls in Niger:

(a) The mentality of the girls themselves, as rightly expressed by Laurin (1963:121)

> [The girls' attitude] shows a definite inferiority complex arising from their social position: 'unaccustomed to having an opinion, girls are convinced that they can do nothing'. This accounts for the lack of aspirations and the absence of any desire to better themselves, and results in their failing to apply themselves to study, as well as boys. Puberty further accentuates this lack of energy. 'It sometimes leads to a general idleness, which is apparent in class, during domestic work and even at play.'

(b) A 'subtle' interpretation of the Koran by men to their advantage. They held the views that:

(i) the place of women was at home, amongst their children. Purdah, the seclusion of women after either puberty or marriage (Smock, 1982; Boserup, 1969 cited by Kelly in Acker *et al.* 1984:85) was practised. Women were not allowed to go out during day time. Parents and relatives visits were done only at night. Thus men did not see women as complementary fellows nor did the latter consider themselves to be so.

(ii) schooling was not made for girls since, according to men the well-being, the happiness of girls on earth and even hereafter is found only in marriage; probably one of the reasons (after the economic one) for early marriages. Parents preferred during the pre-colonial and the early post-colonial periods to give the hands of their daughters, most often to people of their choice, and collect in return huge amounts of money.

Today, the average educated man in Niger regards these attitudes as outdated and even preposterous. After all, a glimpse at what is happening in other Islamic countries – in terms of education – should convince any supporter of *purdah* to let his daughters take advantage of formal education. In effect, as noted by Acker *et*

al. (1984:85),

> whether religion, particularly Islam, depresses women's access to education is not at all clear independent of other factors. In some islamic nations, women's enrollment ratios are higher than in non-Islamic nations, particularly in higher education... Tunisian and Egyptian female enrollment ratios are higher at the primary and secondary level than in India or Costa Rica.

The fact that in countries belonging to the Arab world, female enrolment is higher than in non-Islamic nations is by itself revealing. Islam is understood to be the faith which does not deprive girls of acquiring knowledge, nor does it prevent them from participating in the development of their countries. This view is supported by Nelson (in Acker *et al.*, *ibid.*:211) who argues that

> ideally speaking, in the *Quranic* way of life women as well as men had rights to acquire knowledge, express opinions and participate actively in affairs concerning the survival and well-being of the community. That they have not always been encouraged to do so may rest more in the socio-political conditions of particular historical moments than to the precepts of Islam *per se*.

Table 2.14 — Schooling Rate in 1960, 1977, 1988 / In Population et Developpement (CTIP 1990:24)

Academic Year	Girls & Boys	Girls	Boys
1960	5%	3%	7%
1977	16%	13%	19%
1988	28%	20%	36.5%

2.6.6.2 Present Girls' Education

We should start by saying that the texts regulating the enrolment of pupils clearly state that there should be no discrimination. Children aged 7-8 should be recruited irrespective of their sex, origin, or religion. The sole enrolment criterion is therefore age, for girls as well as for boys. Currently most schools are mixed, a

way of placing boys and girls in the same education conditions. Furthermore, there exist administrative regulations which protect school girls from social practices that could jeopardize their studies. Hence, for any marriage involving a school girl, her parents (the father in particular) are compelled to reimburse the state every cent spent on her formal education. The other deterrent is in connection with schoolgirl pregnancies. Any author of a schoolgirl pregnancy is obliged to (1) reimburse what the state has spent for her formal education, (2) either marry her or be tried then sentenced to no less than 5 years imprisonment. As for the girl, if she is in 6e or 5e she is expelled from school. Girls of other levels are expelled for the time of their pregnancies, but may further their studies after delivery. However, a second pregnancy leads to expulsion from school. Despite these stringent measures, some people manage to infringe them (unpunished), at the expense of the equal opportunities policy that the Ministry is striving to implement. By and large in rural areas as well as in orthodox families, people do not want their daughters to study beyond a certain age, even less to undertake long studies, as mentioned in the Population Policy Project document (C.T.I.P 1990:15):

> Il faut aussi ajouter un problème qui est celui de l'abandon de filles après l'enseignement primaire. Cette situation préoccupante a amené les responsables de l'éducation à se pencher pour analyser le problème. Ils ont pu relever les causes qui sont les suivantes: la reticence des parents qui voient d'un mauvais oeil leurs filles fréquenter l'école jusqu'à un certain âge, le mariage précoce, le désinteressement dû à la pression du milieu qui n'accepte pas que les filles fassent de longues études.

As table 2.14 shows only 3% of the age cohort of females attended school in 1960. Twenty eight years later, this figure is increased by sevenfold while that of boys is increased by sixfold. Progress has certainly been achieved but a lot has to be done if we consider that (1) more than 50% of the population are women, and (2) that Niger has the lowest girls' schooling rate in French-speaking countries of West Africa. The gap between female and male schooling rate widens even further

when moving from primary to university. Thus in 1991, primary education catered for 344,848 pupils of which 124,413 were girls, i.e far below 50% (Cf table 2.9). In the same year, 43,316 male students attended secondary education and 19,071 female students (D.E.S.T 1991:36) in the first cycle and 7,134 male students and 1,813 female students in the second cycle. As for higher education - all branches taken into account -, it registered in 1987-88, 2,938 male students (89%) and 603 female students (17%) (C.T.I.P 1990:15). What remains to be added is the all important fact which shows the imbalance of male students over female students in scientific, environmental and technical studies. Again, traditional beliefs may be regarded as the main culprit. Explaining why in Nigeria gender disparities exist in some science and technology related domains, Kelly (1989:54) notes the following which is also applicable to Niger female students:

> The Nigerian girl is usually made to see herself as a prospective wife, mother and homemaker rather than as a professional. She therefore shuns any career that might interfere with her wifely and motherhood functions. Careers in engineering, environmental studies, and business administration tend to take the worker away from home, touring sites or business establishments, and the like.

However, we should hasten to add that, today, there is no job reserved for only men in Niger. Girls are required to have the same educational levels as boys to enter the labour market as stipulated by Article 6 of the abrogated Constitution. As a result, there are female medical doctors, magistrates, engineers, para-troopers, members of the last parliament; women are also found in such high instances as the High Council of the Republic and the Government (more than 5 altogether). As table 2.15 suggests regulations do not exist which limit the opportunities and horizons of civil servant women registered at the Ministry of Labour. *Catégorie A* the top hierarchy where doctors, professors, engineers, and the like are found, has 16.7% women, the next, *catégorie* B, (for primary school teachers, nurses) 22.6%,

and the last two catégories, C and D contain 30% women. All in all, out of the 37,005 civil servants that the Ministry of Labour counts, 8,441 are women, i.e 22.8%, a non negligeable figure compared to the literacy ratio.

Table 2.15 — Women Civil Servants From 1986 to 1989. Source: MFP/T. (CTIP 1990:21)

Position	30/11/86	30/11/87	30/11/88	30/11/89
Catégorie A1	101	110	127	137
Catégorie A2	189	251	314	390
Catégorie A3	153	212	250	270
Catégorie B1	505	549	610	660
Catégorie B2	658	739	831	884
Catégorie C1	1,744	1,925	2,080	2,248
Catégorie C2	231	280	267	233
Catégorie D1	878	994	1,114	1,146
Catégorie D2	592	607	633	640
Non Cadres	1,985	1,898	1,813	1,833
Total per Year	7,039	7,565	8,039	8,441

2.6.6.3 Adult Education: The Case of Women

The rate of adult illitracy is indeed very high insofar as far as women are concerned. Thus, out of 8,847 persons who attended adult literacy courses in 1985-86 there were only 98 women, (Statut et Role de la Femme C.T.I.P. 1990:16). This is partly due to the fact that adult women are overburdened by domestic work that they have very little time left for learning how to read and write; another reason which is not to be overlooked, resides in the fact that in some *milieu* women are allowed to go out only on very special occasions (marriages, naming ceremonies,

deaths, and the like). In such societies these women are called *dian kubbli*, the litteral translation being *locked up women.*

By way of summary it should be reiterated that there is no official barrier to the education of girls' and women in Niger. However, social traditions still heavily impede the development of girls' and women's education, particularly in rural areas. The government is fully aware of the situation and has accordingly set up safety-nets – ranging from fines to imprisonment- to protect girls during their primary and secondary education.

2.7 Analysis of the Major Education Reforms

As already indicated in the introductory chapter, the shortcomings of the Nigérien education system translate themselves into the huge students drop-out rates, the social inadaptation, the cultural alienation and the excessive cost of education. Furthermore, teacher education, the pillar on which lies any education system is not satisfactorily monitored to the benefit of the pupils and the teachers alike. To these serious problems may be added such predicaments as the steady growth of the population and the depreciation of the teaching profession itself. Having thus merely listed the problems of the Nigérien education system, let us now elaborate with some statistical data.

Siddo (1976:238) notes that in 1970, only 90 pupils out of 1000 pupils enrolled in *Cours d'Initiation* reached the *Cours Moyen 2* (end of Primary Education) in 6 years (normal cursus), i.e without repeating a class; of the same 1000 pupils only 203 reached the *Cours Moyen 2* in 7 years, i.e after repeating 1 class; finally, 348 reached the *Cours Moyen 2* after repeating two classes. In other words, the remaining 349 did not succeed since according to the school regulations pupils are

only allowed to repeat twice *per* cycle (Primary, first cycle Secondary, second cycle Secondary). This problem is not common to Niger alone. In effect, Gbari (1991:11) points out that

> Cours Moyen 2 is the "filter" of the system indeed. Out of 35,000 candidates [in Côte d' Ivoire], only 12,000 pass, 8,000 more enter 6e through parallel enrolment, i.e they register by unofficial channels.

With regard to the cost of education it is one of the highest in the region. Though the adage says *Si tu penses que l'éducation coûte cher, essaie l'ignorance* the state is overburdened and 'suffocated' by the weight of the education expenditures. It cannot continue to be the only provider and financial source of education.

School programmes have been decried for a long time and need appropriate readjustment, starting with a review of the place of the language of instruction, that is, French. The general feeling is that the provision of instruction in French does more harm than good to children. The following passages, excerpts from various seminars or articles writen by Niger educationists comment further on the language of instruction issue:

> [1] Ceci montre à l'évidence que l'utilisation exclusive du français dès la scolarisation crée un choc brutal, une rupture entre l'enfant et son environnement linguistique et culturel et aboutit à l'inhibition et à la dépersonnalisation: mis très tôt en contact avec cette langue, l'enfant intériorise les valeurs qu'elle véhicule, la vision du monde et l'idéologie qu'elle exprime (Siddo 1976:237).

> [2] La situation linguistique au Niger est caractérisée par le paradoxe suivant: [les langues parlées par la majorité des nigériens] n'ont aucun statut officiel alors que la langue française utilisée tant bien que mal par moins de 5% de la nation est une langue officielle (langue d'enseignement, instrument de travail et de promotion sociale)... Il apparait nettement que la réalité linguistique est en contradiction fondamentale avec la politique linguistique. Les analyses sont unanimes sur l'échec du système éducatif. En effet sur le plan psychologique, la scolarisation dans une langue étrangère, en l'occurrence le français, soumet l'enfant à un déséquilibre dont l'impact sur son développement n'est plus à démontrer: blocages psychologiques, inadaptation sociale, échecs scolaires, aliénation culturelle, etc...(Séminaire de réflexion sur la Réforme de l' Enseignement au Niger du 4 au 12 septembre, 1975:1).

Clearly, there is a need for educational reforms because there do exist numerous internal and external forces capable of bringing about changes. In effect, Levin (1976) in Fullan & Stiegelbauer (1991:17) notes that there are three broad ways in which pressures for educational policy change may arise:

1. through natural disasters such as earthquakes, floods, famines, and the like;

2. through external forces such as imported technology and values, and immigration; and

3. through internal contradictions such as when indigenous changes in technology lead to new social patterns and needs, or when one or more groups in society perceive a discrepancy between educational values and outcomes affecting themselves or others in whom they have an interest.

In Niger, dissatisfied students, teachers, parents, have been the source of pressure for educational policy change. This has led the Nigérien government to attempt a series of reforms, which in the end had limited success. In the early sixties a reform programme was proposed by the late Pr Abdou Moumouni, but it was never piloted let alone institutionalized, simply because another Reform project was also presented by the *inspecteur d'académie*, Mr Deygout. The then National Education Committee had to forget about the early sixties' reform for it could not choose, probably for political reasons, either of the reform proposals. Up to 1970 the major education reform experienced by the system was mainly regarding the currriculum. For instance, for secondary education, students were taught about African literature rather than about the French classics; Latin was also suppressed from the curriculum and what is more, emphasis was laid on the immediate environment of the students as well as their national history and that of Africa in general.

In 1972 the *Commision Nationale pour la Réforme de l' Enseignement et le Plan de Scolarisation* (decree 72/45 PRN/MEN of May 19, 1972) was created. One of the major missions of this reform was to create experimental schools where Niger national languages are taught as media of instruction – at least for the first three years. Today, though the number of experimental school is important and the evaluation sucessful, this education reform is at a standstill. The most surprising thing is that the intellectuals, government members or civil servants who send their children to such schools are rare, which confirms Fullan and Stiegelbauer's (1991:15) view about reforms:

> many innovations and reforms were never implemented in practice (i.e., real change was never accomplished) as to the fact that societal, political, and economic forces inhibit change within the educational system.

Many other reforms were put aside probably for the same reasons. Thus the outcomes of the National Debate on Education held in 1982 in Zinder, the National Seminar of A.P.P (*Activités Pratiques et Productives* held in Matamèye, the National Seminar on the Curriculum held in Niamey in 1987, and others, have suffered the same fate. In a country where a paucity of education research prevails, decisions reached by members of a national conference or a national seminar are by far, much better than those taken by a handful of people, who for most of the time remain seated behind big desks. It is high time that decision makers started taking into consideration views and decisions stemming from national seminars and conferences, rather than pile up reports in drawers or cupboards.

2.8 Conclusion

By way of summary it should be noted that:

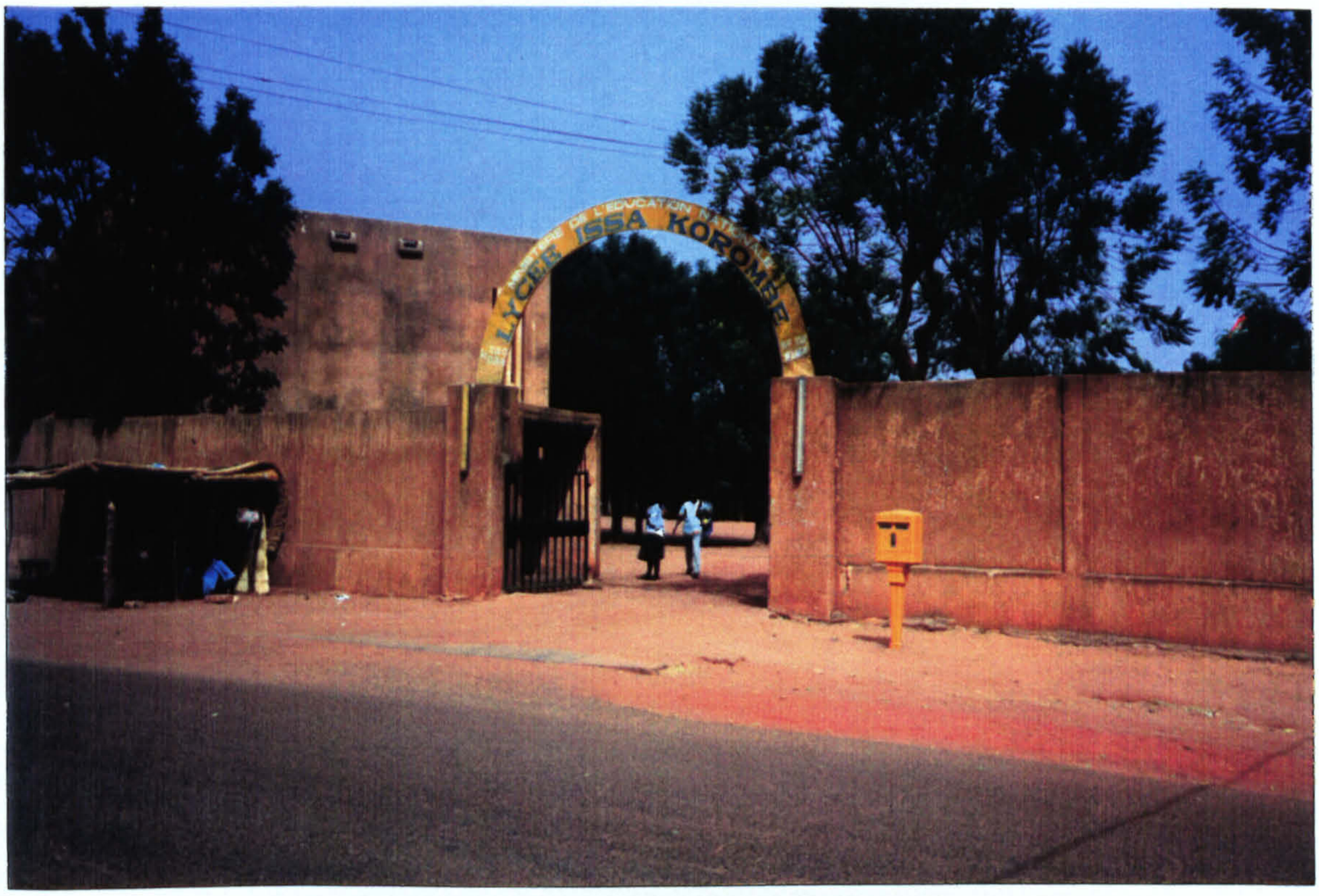
1. As regards the curriculum, radical changes ought to be implemented in all its

four constituents, namely (i) aims and objectives, (ii) content, (iii) pedagogy (particularly in teacher education) and (iv) evaluation.

2. In terms of financing education, the state cannot simply afford, all alone, to pay for the primary, secondary and tertiary education of all its children. There is an urgent need to find a solution to ease the burden of the state before it is too late.

3. Finally, regarding the organization of the Ministry, the salient points remain: (i) the lack of certain fundamental education Acts; (ii) the lack of sufficient circulation of information; (iii) the heaviness of the administrative machinery.

The country's first Lycée: Issa Korombé



Students attending a Physics lecture

Chapter III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING IN NIGER

> It has been said that an important function of education is to prepare people to cope with changes in society. No other subject can make such a crucial contribution as a foreign language towards preparing young people to meet new societies or changes in their own society (**Perren 1978:10**).

3.1 Secondary Schools Curriculum

3.1.1 Basic Concepts of the Curriculum

Before engaging in any discussion relating to English Language Teaching in Niger, it is of utmost importance to define the context in which the term 'curriculum' is referred to in the present chapter. Stemming from the Latin *currere* "to run" – then metaphorically used to mean "a course to be covered"– 'curriculum' may be regarded as a semantically complex lexical item because of the many interacting factors involved. The term may, in effect possess both broad and narrow meanings as explained by Barrow and Milburn (1990:84):

> educators define 'curriculum' in many ways: some use the term in very limited and specific contexts, others attach very broad and general meanings; some define it in descriptive terms (what curriculum is), others in prescriptive terms (what curriculum ought to be). Resolving (or even penetrating) such confusion is no easy task.

Since medieval times, the term curriculum has been employed to refer to 'the way subjects are organized in a school timetable' - which has led many people

outside the education arena to 'associate it with the outline of a course progamme (e.g. 'O' level mathematics, or Grade 10 history) written on a piece of paper' (Barrow & Milburn *ibid.*). From this standpoint, curriculum may be viewed as synonymous with syllabus - a connotation that the term under discussion has in the English educational system. In many countries including Niger, curriculum refers to the officially recognized programmes. However, in other instances, curriculum and syllabus are defined as distinct from each other, as notes Ullmann (1982:255-6):

> 'Curriculum' is used as a general term for the entire organized teaching plan of a subject. 'Syllabus', on the other hand, refers to a sub-area of curriculum. A curriculum, therefore, can consist of a number of syllabuses.

Another meaning of curriculum is based on the view according to which it is defined in terms of objectives of student learning. Tyler (1950 in Molnar & Zahorik 1977:2-3) devised the following fundamental questions identifying the curriculum:

(1) What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?

(2) What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?

(3) How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?

(4) How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

This view is also adopted by Ullmann (1982:256) who argues that a curriculum should include the following key components: 'objectives; content which is selected and organized according to clearly defined principles; teaching strategies; and evaluation'.

An alternative view with a completely different meaning from those so far mentioned can be given here. It is defined in accordance with the broader view and is referred to as 'all the experiences that a child has in school', that is, 'the

nature of the subject matter under study, actions of teachers in the classroom, attitudes fostered in students and texts and other materials used by students' (Barrow & Milburn *ibid.*:85-6). Similarly, Dalin (1978) and Morrison & Ridley (1988:34) suggest that the curriculum may 'contain reference to the whole school - a systemic and complex model' comprising:

1. Participants and roles, school organizational, administrative and management structures and networks.

2. Contexts of the curriculum - historical, ideological, philosophical, sociological, cultural, political, psychological and so on.

3. The relationships of the school and its curriculum to wider society.

4. Curriculum aims, content, pedagogies, resources, evaluation, development strategies and directions.

5. Styles and modes of curriculum planning and dissemination - problem-solving , interactive and centre-periphery (Havelock, 1973 in Morrison and Ridley *ibid.*)

But as some educationists contend (Barrow & Milburn, 1990:84) such a broad definition raises many questions such as:

- What are the limitations of the term?
- Does the curriculum comprise things happening in the hall-way?
- To what goals are experiences aimed?
- What are the criteria of selection of experiences?
- What is then distinctly educational about a curriculum in this sense? (Barrow & Milburn, 1990:84).

The diversity of the meaning of curriculum has led some scholars to consider it as 'a set of principles to guide prospective teachers and other educators'. Thus, the term is 'confined to a discussion of principles that govern, on one hand, the selection of content and strategies, and, on the other, such matters as evaluation and student progress' (Barrow & Milburn *ibid.*). Another explanation, quite similar to this one is provided by Dressel (1976 in Mitzel *et al.* 1982:401) for whom curriculum

> **refers to the composite array of learning experiences provided by an institution or department or to a fixed course of study (program) leading to a certificate or degree.**

Having summarily presented some of the connotations attributed to the term curriculum, it remains to outline the context in which it is used in the next sections. To be on the safe side, it has been found wiser to retain both narrow and broad meanings. Hence, under the heading 'secondary schools curriculum' the following will be referred to (a) subject matters (e.g. Mathematics, French, English and the like) - thereby setting the study of English in a general context, (b) teaching materials, (c) student assessment, (d) teacher development and (e) curriculum development and innovation. In this case it is the broad meaning which will be used. Finally, it may also outline circumstances in the course of which English *per se* would be referred to as curriculum - hence the narrow meaning.

3.1.2 The C.E.G. and Lycée Curricula

The curricula in operation in *C.E.G.s* and *Lycées* are different in many respects given the age of the students, the objectives assigned to each type of school, and above all the organization of their curricula. The major common denominator they share is the educational policy which is based on general instruction leading to an academic certificate - that is, the B.E.P.C. for the *C.E.G.s* and the Baccalaureate for the *Lycées*. As put by Kogoe (1985:50) the decision makers have

inherited the view of curricula

> that [still leads] students to become job seekers rather than enabling them to undertake self-employment or entrepreneurial ventures that would create employment opportunities.

The *C.E.G.* curriculum comprises 9 subject matters found in the various academic disciplines, e.g Sciences, Mathematics, Humanities and Languages. Altogether, students spend between 24 hours and 26 hours *per* week studying the different components of the curriculum, for a period of approximately 9 months - duration of the academic year (cf table 3.1). At this level of the educational system, the curriculum lays more emphasis on general instruction than manual work or vocational training - an educational conception which is increasingly attracting heavy criticism. In terms of the overall time spent on subjects, *sixième* and *cinquième* students spend the same amount of time learning English, French or Mathematics, i.e about 1/5 of the weekly school schedule. As for the *quatrième* and *troisième* students, the weekly schedule (cf table 3.1) also shows that they have the same amount of time *per* week learning English or French, i.e 4 hours.

According to their abilities, second cycle students are oriented to one of the three streams known as *séries* A, C and D and the amount of time they spend on learning at school depends on the stream. It will simply be mentioned that *seconde* A and C students' schedule is the least heavy with 30 hours a week, compared to 33 hours for *terminale* C - which has the heaviest timetable. Regarding the learning of foreign languages, it is worth noting that all *séries* A, C, and D students continue studying English. However, *série* A, i.e literary students have the possibility to choose another foreign language (Arabic - though one of the 10 national languages -, German, and Spanish) in addition to English. The vast majority of the students pursue only the study of English rather than choose Arabic, German or Spanish

- as table 3.3 reveals. This is an indication of the importance given to English Language teaching in Niger, as pointed out by Kaba Gaston (1978:2), one of the national E.L.T. pioneers and former Head of the English Department of Niamey University:

> [According to the Inspector of the Academy, Mr Tranchart], there has been a great deal of interest shown in this subject [English] by the political and social elite.

In *C.E.G.s* the *coefficient* or weighting allotted to English is 2 (i.e graded out of 40) compared to 4 for French (which encapsulates Dictation and Questions worth 40 points, Composition worth 40), 3 for Mathematics (i.e 60 points for Algebra and Geometry), 1 for History and Geography (10 points for each), 1 for Physics (8 points for treating a question relating to either Physics or Chemistry, and 12 points for a problem of either Chemistry or Physics), 1 for Biology and Physical Education 1. In *Lycées* the weighting of the subjects again varies according to the streams. Thus in *terminale A* for instance, the major subjects are French, Philosophy and English which carry a *coefficient* of 4 for each of the first two subjects, and 3 for the last one.

Unlike English, most of the C.E.G. subjects have undergone very little change as regards the examinations. In Mathematics for instance, students have had for many years the same type of examination based on either traditional or modern Mathematics. In French, students' spelling and knowledge of the grammar and vocabulary have always been tested through what has been known for half a century as *dictée, questions, rédaction.* In History and Geography, students have to study both subjects from October to April/May, only to be told that after a random draw, examination questions will be about History *or* Geography - not both. Practically, curriculum developers and/or evaluators have kept the *status quo* in many subjects as far as the student assessment is concerned.

Table 3.1 — Weekly Schedule of the First Cycle (D.E.S.T. / M.E.N.)

Subjects	6ème	5ème	4ème	3ème
Mathematics	5 hours	5 hours	5 hours	5 hours
Natural Sciences	2 hours	2 hours	2 hours	3hours
Technology	2 hours	2 hours	1 h 30	1 h 30
Physics	N.A	N.A	3 hours	3 hours
History & Geography	2 hours	2 hours	2 hours	3 hours
Civics	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour	1 hour
French	5 hours	5 hours	4 hours	4 hours
English	5 hours	5 hours	4 hours	4 hours
Physical Education	2 hours	2 hours	2 hours	2 hours
Total	24 hours	24 hours	24 h 30	26 h 30

Probably, because people involved in E.L.T. were closely following the different pedagogical trends, the English examination was set according to the methodology, textbooks of a given period, and on the basis of the principles that underly the teaching of this language. This view is supported by the following statement reported by Kaba (1982:2)

> As far as English is concerned, it is, according to the former Inspector of the Academy, Mr Tranchart, the only country in West Africa which has altered the nature of its examinations at the secondary level.

In terms of examinations the second cycle has witnessed some changes in English following criticisms made by two University lecturers, Etienne Galle and Gaston Kaba (in Kaba 1978:47-52), the I.N.D.R.A.P. (National Institute for Educational Research) E.L.T. team and many teachers of English across the country. For many years, translation occupied a very important place in the students' assessment. English teachers finally succeeded in reforming the English examination in 1987 thanks to their determination. The documents relating to this reform were

Table 3.2 — Weekly Timetable in the Second Cycle (D.E.S.T. / M.E.N.)

School Subjects	Seconde		Première			Terminale		
	A	C	A	C	D	A	C	D
French	5	5	5	4	4	2	2	2
English	3	3	4	3	3	4	2	2
Langue Vivante 2	5	N.A	5	N.A	N.A	3	N.A	N.A
Hist/Geog & Civics	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Mathematics	3	5	3	6	5	3	9	6
Physics	3	6	2	6	5	N.A	6	5
Biology	2	2	2	2	4	3	2	5
Physical Education	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Philosophy	N.A	N.A	2	2	2	8	3	3
Drawing (optional)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Manual Works (opt.)	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Domestic Science	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total	30 H	30 H	32 H	32 H	32 H	33 H	33 H	32H

Table 3.3 — School Population of German Learners in Niger

School	1986-87	1987-88	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	Total
Lycée Kassai	11	12	6	3	2	34
Lycée Kouara	-	14	3	1	5	23
Lycée Issa K.	-	-	1	-	-	1
Lycée Mariama	-	1	-	-	-	1
Total	11	27	10	4	7	59

jointly signed by the Ministers of Education and Higher Education and Technology.

From the point of view of teaching materials, since independence, the Nigérien

Lycée and C.E.G. students have used a variety of English textbooks, following the adaptation E.L.T. Advisers and teachers of English in Niger were endeavouring to make with the methodological evolution. Kaba (1978:10-14) listed 18 different textbooks used from the early 1960s to the late 1970s of which the following may ring a bell in the mind of any Nigérien educated person:

(1) Passport to English (a series from 6ème to 4ème) (Girard & Didier);

(2) L'Anglais Vivant; Edition Bleue (1940) Carpentier P.M and Fialip. Paris Hachette.

(3) L'Anglais par l'Action (Richard, P. & Hall, W.);

(4) L'Anglais en Afrique et à Madagascar (a series from 6ème to 3ème (Bouet, A.J.);

(5) L'Anglais en Seconde (also series for Première and Terminale) (Guitard & Renault);

(6) English for French Speaking Africa (a series of 4 books) (D. Mills & Doust);

(7) Today's English (Centre Linguistique Appliqué de Dakar);

(8) L'Anglais en Afrique (Terminale), and so forth.

English textbooks in most of the cases reflected a given methodology. Thus, *Passport to English, l'Anglais en Action, l'Anglais par l'illustration* were all reminiscent of either the Grammar Translation, or the Direct Method, or even to some extent the audio-visual eras (*vide infra*). *L'Anglais en Afrique, African Ways*, and *Elsewhere in Africa* may be viewed as a combination of the Grammar-Translation Method but with an African background. *English for French-speaking Africa / Mills series* one of the textbooks in use nowadays in the first cycle was originally

based on the Audio-Lingual Method. Its second edition, however, encapsulates an eclectic approach ranging from Audio-Lingual to Communicative approaches. The last book, - the most up-to-date because in agreement with all regulations set by the 1987 National Seminar on Teaching Materials and Programmes -, is *English for the Sahel*, a book designed by Nigérien and American teachers and specialists. Unlike all books so far used in C.E.G.s and *Lycées*, *English for the Sahel* has the advantage of being designed by Nigérien teachers (with the help of native speakers) for Nigérien students; furthermore, it has gone through many stages of piloting in many parts of the country and thus has stood all sorts of scrutiny.

In other subjects such as French, History and Geography the major characteristics of present textbooks is mostly the 'local reference' they are given. In other words, French textbooks no longer discuss the French 'Great Authors'- La Fontaine, Victor Hugo, Corneille and the like - but rather present texts from African literature. In History and Geography emphasis is placed on the local environment and Africa, rather than Ancient Greece, the Mesopotamia, or the physical aspects of France.

3.2 The English Curriculum

The English syllabus is the result of about two years group work which gathered in each of the *chef lieu de Département* teachers of English and E.L.T. Advisers. In Niamey the capital, for instance, there were two distinct groups on which fell the heavy responsibility of designing the English syllabuses: one for the second cycle and the other for the first cycle. Each group encompassed teachers of either C.E.G. or *Lycée*, E.L.T. Advisers based in inspectorate or at I.N.D.R.A.P., and University lecturers in charge of the training of prospective English teachers. Sug-

gestions about the syllabuses from the various inspectorates of the country were centralized at I.N.D.R.A.P. where a team designated by the Minister of Higher Education and Education has to make the synthesis of all the suggestions and propositions made by English teachers all over the country. A national seminar in which school administrators, parents' association members, representative of some social organizations and national institutes took part, was held in Niamey in 1987 to revise not only the English syllabus but also other components of the curriculum. Briefly speaking, it was in this atmosphere that the English curriculum came to exist.

3.2.1 English and other Foreign Languages

Introduced in the curriculum in the fifties, English may be regarded as an important part of the Nigérien educational system. Since then, it has been taught as a foreign language from the first cycle of Secondary Education to University. In other words, pupils study English for four years in the first cycle of Secondary Education (From 6ème to 3ème), three years in the second cycle of Secondary Education (from *seconde* to *terminale*) and for three years or more at University level.

School population statistics of the academic year 1988-1989 (M.E.N. /D.E.P. 1989) show that more than 65,805 pupils attended Secondary Education, which is very revealing inasmuch as this figure also indicates the number of people officially exposed to English. It is worth noting that at the level of the first cycle English is compulsory for all pupils, and occupies the third position in terms of 'importance' because of the coefficient it is alloted (*vide supra*).

At University level, English remains a requirement for most students. They

are given weekly two hours of English for Special Purposes and quite often their bibliographies contain books written in English.

Public and private schools are not the only places where English is taught in Niger. The American Cultural Centre of Niamey has steadily increased the number of adults eager to learn English. Amongst them are civil-servants who hope to further their studies in an English speaking country and administration officials who wish to apply for international posts. Job applicants for international positions are more likely to be hired if they master English in addition to French which confirms Perren's (1979:14) argument according to which 'the command of English and French goes further towards making one a 'citizen of the world' than a combination of English with any other language'. Furthermore, other adult learners are well-aware of the fact that, everywhere in the world, English remains the lingua-franca *par excellence*, and wherever they travel to, providing they speak English, they will be able to communicate.

Regarding German and Spanish, the two other foreign languages taught in the second cycle of Secondary Education, very few pupils embark on their learning. Thus, as table 3.3 shows, in 1988-1989 out of the 271 classes of the second cycle in Niger, only 3 classes of ten pupils chose German (the most widely used language in Europe) as the foreign language to study. As for Spanish – the world's third language spoken by 250 million people in 21 countries – less than one hundred pupils study it in the whole country.

English Language Teaching, more than any other subject, has undergone a variety of changes, which have given it the stature it has today. As will be revealed later, these changes or innovations occurred in all the various aspects of the English curriculum: methodology / approaches, teaching materials, student assessment,

teacher development, training of trainers, a whole transformation that would not leave even teachers of other subjects indifferent. In order to give an account of these changes, it is useful to provide the reader with a summary view centring on (a) the objectives underlying E.L.T. in Niger and the English syllabus content, (b) the inception of E.L.T. in Niger, (c) the forces that contributed to its enhancement, and (d) the place of English *per se* in the country.

3.2.2 Why English in the Curriculum?

As already stated, the initial reasons for teaching English are to be found in the colonial curricula imposed to the country as mentioned by Donaghy, a Peace Corps volunteer, in Squires (1977:6)

> Very basically, the reason for English in secondary schools here is that Niger still follows the dictates of the French national educational system. One of the requirements for all French children in C.E.G.s is English - thus it is in Niger.

However, today there exist numerous noble motives for learning English in Niger. Contemporary history and the geographical location of the country have made many a Niger citizen aware of the importance of the English language. Many Nigériens view English as the lingua franca that could help Francophone and Anglophone Africans understand each other and work towards African unity; some regard it as the international language capable of bringing about universal understanding, while some others consider it to be the language of commerce. The following lines encapsulate such views reported by Squires (1977:7):

> [1] The colonialists divided African Empires and African families according to their interests, their fancies, and caprices. So what's left nowadays? An atmosphere, caused by the differences of our languages (French-English borders especially)... Because Africa has been so divided, learning in Niger is one of the rare ways which helps Nigériens improve their communications, their relationships, and understanding, to reach African unity with Nigerians, Gambians, Zambians, Kenyans, etc.
>
> [2] We must accept the international importance of English today ... as a means of culture, communications, and universal understanding ... for culture hasn't

its limits only within African wisdom or the French condition, but is universal.

> [3] Niger has a boundary of about three hundred kilometers with Nigeria, an English speaking country. And most of our economic activities are carried on between this country and ours, or through it. Both countries have the same tribes all along their boundary. Yet use of an official language is a break for their relations.

In the next few lines an attempt is made to discuss some of the reasons why foreign languages should be included in the curriculum. It must be understood that the following reasons may be related to any foreign language, be it European or African. First of all, four major reasons may be put forth, *viz.* educational, social, political and economic (James in Perren 1978:7) which are applicable to any educational system. There is a general agreement that the learning of a foreign language can enhance the educational growth of students. Furthermore, 'the study of a foreign language makes a major and distinctive contribution to the educational experience of schoolchildren, by which it can bring human understanding and a heightened self-awareness. It is also culturally broadening and educationally humanising and helps to train the mind' (James in Perren, *ibid.:7-8*). Another positive aspect of foreign language learning is the opportunity that students have to 'see into another society and to see his own language and society through the eyes of a foreigner' (BALT, 1977 in Perren *ibid.* As demonstrated by some studies ((Taunton report 1868) (Report, 1918)) in Perren (*ibid.*) pupils gain tremendously in the study of their own languages by studying another. The list of reasons may be extended, but a conclusion is to be drawn by once more referring to James (in Perren *ibid.:8*) who concedes that:

> a major part of the educational task of the school is to help young people to think clearly and develop balanced and socially adjusted personalities, and the study of a modern language contributes to this ends (Tools for the job, 1972). The long-term aim is to develop the individual – his personality, his skills, his ability to think and to manupilate language – and foreign language teaching has a part to play in all of these. It should expand the pupil's horizons, add a new dimension to his experience and arouse in him a curiosity to know more about the world outside.

As mentioned earlier, there also exist social and political reasons for including foreign languages in the curriculum. The social and political aspects related to foreign language learning, as Perren has pointed out 'have become something of a minefield'. Indeed, some ill-intentioned people may see in the use of foreign languages in schools a form of neocolonialism or domination of the European culture on others. In the same vein, some others would view English Language teaching as a 'cultural invasion' that is, a state in which

> the invaders penetrate the cultural context of another group and, ignoring the potential of the matter,... impose their own view of the world upon those they invade and inhibit the creativity of the invaded by curbing their expression (Freire, 1972:121) in Abbott (1992:174).

Another point to bring forward is the well-established fact that development is linked to technology and that an international language like English may be the vehicle to promote technological development of individual countries. Abbott notes that because 'development has been interpreted as 'becoming more like the West', western donors and cultural agencies have been accused of cultural imperialism. However, the reality is different, as Inayatullah (1967) (in Abbott, 1992:174) contends

> the goals of the élite in developing societies are generally in conformity with the technical assistance programs ... and since these élites are seen as showing a concern to modernize their societies, for them ... the danger of being charged with cultural imperialism does not exist.

Standpoints relating to the social and political objectives of foreign languages are numerous and diverse. Hawkins (in Perren 1979:9) posits the view that foreign language study not only provides for the culturally disadvantaged a chance to compete with their 'advantaged' peers from a starting gate of common ignorance, but it gives a chance to 'retraverse' some important conceptualising patterns to pupils who, for a variety of reasons, have been less successful in 'categorising

important areas of learning'. Furthermore, today's world comprises nations which seek mutual understanding and help. If cooperation amongst countries is to be efficiently achieved, it is to be carried out through communication, a view which has been expressed as follows in the Helsinki Final Act (Perren 1979:11)

> the study of foreign languages and cultures [is] a vital element in communication and the strengthening of international ties, resolving therefore to promote the wider spread of foreign language study among the different types of secondary education establishment as well as other levels.

Because of all the reasons mentioned above English is the foreign language to which more importance is secured. It remains the only African or European foreign language broadcast in the Nigérien radio and TV programmes. Hence, once a week O.R.T.N. the National Radio Broadcasting Station broadcasts the news in English and Télé Sahel, the National Television Station, presents a thirty minute English lesson that many people enjoy.

The last point to be mentioned, is in connection with the social and political aims adopted by the Nigérien people – that is democracy. If this is to be achieved fully

> then the study of foreign languages can be seen as one of the essentially emancipating elements in the curriculum, without which the individual remains imprisoned in the environment in which he is raised or dependent on others to give him an account of the polyglot world. This is true not only of the able few who travel or read with profit in the foreign language; studying a foreign language compels even pupils of modest ability to compare concepts in simple but important ways (Hawkins 1974 in Perren *ibid.*).

Finally, what are the economic reasons? As far as Niger is concerned most of its commercial ties with African countries are with Nigeria whose official language is English. In effect, commercial enterprises between the two countries are flourishing, for everyday, thousands of people cross the border either side. These Nigérien tradesmen and tradeswomen today would acknowledge that their mastery of one

or more foreign languages (Yoruba, Ibo, English and the like) may secure, as put by Dunbar in Perren (*ibid.*), 'the future economic well-being of the country'. Indeed as pointed out by The Council of Europe, (1969:2 in Perren, 1979:12)

> language learning is no longer merely a vehicle for the educational and social development of the individual, it also has a precisely defined function as a commercial tool on a national scale. This is in turn linked with the political factor: a better knowledge of modern European languages [as well as that of other influencial African foreign languages] will lead to improved international links, on which economic progress increasingly depends.

By way of summary, it may be said that in Niger, English is not only viewed as the most widespread language in the world, but also as an influencial language used in academic studies, business and commerce. Because of the geo-political context of the country and its opening onto the external world, it has been found indispensable to include English in the curriculum and secure it an important status. Finally, Nigérien intellectuals and policy-makers are aware of the fact that most of the literature on today' s technology and science is in English, and that Niger like any other country needs technology and science in order to develop and enhance its inhabitants' welfare.

3.2.3 Objectives Underlying the Learning of English in Niger

The English syllabus has subdivided the objectives of English learning into two categories known as general objectives and specific objectives. As regards the first category of objectives, the syllabus states that they are threefold:

(a) `Practical objectives` based on the use of English as means of communication, exchange and information;

(b) `Cultural objectives` based on the initiation into the cultures and civilizations of the English speaking world;

(c) **Educational** objectives based on the development of the students' abilities which would lead them to a better understanding of themselves and the world surrounding them.

The designers of the syllabus emphasize that equal importance be attached to these three objectives so that by the end of the first cycle students should be able (1) in terms of listening, to understand an interlocutor who speaks clearly and distinctly about a topic s/he is acquainted with; s/he should be able to answer questions or to report what s/he has been told; (2) with regard to speaking, s/he should be able to describe people, things, places, events or give orders, explain simple procedures, express his/her opinion on varied topics, in simple and correct English; (3) with regard to reading, the first cycle student should be able to read texts or parts of text aloud, respecting pronunciation and intonation; the student should also be able to spell words using the English alphabet; s/he should demonstrate his/her understanding of a text by answering questions relating to it or by making a summary of it; finally s/he should be able to read silently a text which has a lot of 'active' vocabulary and little 'passive' vocabulary, by deducing the meaning of the passive words; as for the fourth skill, i.e writing, the student should be able to write simple or complex sentences of his/her own in dialogues, or in describing persons, places, animals, events, respecting the punctuation; s/he should finally be able to write paragraphs on familiar topics.

Each of the 4 forms (i.e 6ème, 5ème, 4ème and 3ème) has its own specific objectives in terms of the 4 skills, *viz.* listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Regarding the students of the second cycle, they should be able, in addition to what is expected of first cycle students, to understand radio news bulletins in English (destined to speakers of languages other than English), to take notes,

express themselves freely, including conversing with an interlocutor from an English speaking country. By the end of the second cycle the students should be able to read intelligibly any text from their textbook or any simple literary text. Finally s/he should be able to write short essays on themes discussed in class or of common interest.

3.3 An Overview of E.L.T. Methods in Niger and their Proponents

3.3.1 The Inception of E.L.T. in Niger

From what has been said hitherto about the Nigérien education system, it is a tautology to state that English has been a whole part of the curriculum in secondary education well before flag independence. The first teachers of English were French *Coopérants* and a very few Africans and nationals. As non-native speakers of English, the method they used in those days is known as the *Grammar-Translation Method.* Those of the Nigériens who learnt English in books such as *Passport to English* or *l'Anglais en Action* or even more recently *l'Anglais par l'Illustration*, certainly remember that most of the teaching was based on the study of grammatical structures and the translation of passages either form English to French (version) or from French to English (thème).

In those days, the study of modern languages – including English – had three major objectives (U.N.E.S.C.O.:1955:36): (a) a practical knowledge of the foreign language; (b) the formation of the student's character; and (c) a general introduction to the civilization of a foreign language – which led Nigérien students of the sixties to learn extensively about Mr. and Mrs. Wilson and their two children, John and Betty, the English weather, and also about various famous places in England.

The history of this method is given by Howatt (1984:131-146), according to whom it could have been called the grammar school method simply because it was initially devised to be used in secondary schools. The oldest method used in teaching modern languages, the Grammar-Translation, was initiated by the German, Johann Christian Fick in 1793. The method itself is an adaptation of techniques employed in the teaching of classical languages (Latin and Greek). Its 'central feature was the replacement of the traditional texts, by exemplificatory *sentences*'. It was, in effect this special status given to the sentence at the expense of the text which gave rise to all the criticism about Grammar-Translation Method. Another problem related to this method is its focus on writing, which does not enable students to cultivate fluency or spontaneity. Others blame the method for using translation as its cornerstone, and thus contend that

> translation itself is a specialised skill, and not everyone wants to be a translator. Neither is it necessarily true that the best way of acquiring facility in a foreign language is through translation (Brumfit & Roberts 1983:80).

But what is to be retained is that the method does not intend to give learners the fluency or spontaneity of the native speaker; it purports to help learners become good readers or writers as noted by Byram (1983:110)

> The 'grammar-translation method' has been widely and justly criticised, but it should not be criticised for not doing what it did not set out to do: to produce speakers of the language on the model of, and assessed against the ideal of, a native speaker - and a highly educated native speaker to boot. It is more reasonable to assume that it set out to produce a 'native reader and writer' - a more manageable and attainable aim, I would suggest, whatever the method.

It should be pointed out that though the Audiovisual Method was brought to light and developed by C.R.E.D.I.F. (Centre de Recherche et d'Etude pour la Diffusion du Français) in France in the fifties, it was hardly applied to English language teaching by the then English staff. This may be so because of the principles underlying the method which, as noted by Stern (1983:46-7), is devised so as to

enable learners of French to

(1) be familiar with everyday language as defined in the *français fondamental*;

(2) talk more consecutively on general topics and to read non-specialized fiction and newspaper; and

(3) use more specialized discourse of professional and other interests.

Clearly the method is devised for native speakers of French or teachers who have French as a second language, and it also necessitates the use of visual aids, records and tape recorders which were not affordable in those days in schools. These may be the chief reasons which indeed explain why teachers of the sixties and even of the early seventies shied away from the application of the Audiovisual Method in the field of English Language Teaching.

In the mid sixties another type of English teachers joined the French 'Coopérants' and the few nationals and African staff. They were members of the V.S.O. (Voluntary Service Overseas) most of whom were University graduates or certified teachers. Most of them worked in *Lycées* rather than C.E.G.s simply because the methodology used in the latter institutions requires the grasp of French. As native speakers of English and non-speakers of French (the language used to teach English) the V.S.O. teachers obviously did not use the Grammar-Translation Method. They were the first to utilize a new method known as the Direct Method. Because seen as a method created to replace a 'decaying' one, it was given a certain number of names : the 'new' or 'newer' 'Reform', 'Natural', 'Rational', 'Sensible', 'Correct', 'Direct', 'Phonetical', 'Imitative', 'Analytical', 'Concrete', 'Conversation', 'Anti-clasical', 'Anti-grammatical', 'Anti-translation' (Jespersen 1904:2 in Richardson 1983:24). All these possible names of the new methods to some degree encapsulate

the essence of the method. The major idea behind it is to *teach the language*, not *about it*, as it used to be done by advocates of the Grammar-Translation Method. Viëtor (1882:4 in Richardson *ibid.*:25) one of the reformers who vehemently fought the Grammar-Translation Method argues that:

> even if you succeed in ramming into [the child] the best of grammars and the most comprehensive of dictionaries, what he would have learned would still not be the language.

The V.S.O. teachers, unlike their French or national counterparts, taught grammar inductively, - with hardly no recourse to L1 - that is, 'by inducing the rules of how the language behaves from the actual language itself' (Richardson *ibid.*). In so doing, teachers encouraged students to listen carefully to patterns of development, to observe how patterns are presented in order to draw their own conclusions as to the behaviour of a given grammatical structure. Like the Direct Methodists, the V.S.O. teachers dedicated themselves to teaching English mostly in English, and thus compelling students to think 'spontaneously' in English. However, as is the case for all methods, the Direct Method came later on under the heavy criticism of the proponents of the 'new' method, (in this instance the Audio-Lingual Method) who stressed its lack of linguistic basis and failure to grade language data with sufficient scientific care (Stern, 1983:464). Though the V.S.O. did not last long in Niger, it had the merit of having introduced a method whose major characteristic – the teaching of English through English language and culture (to some extent) – is the backbone of many publicised new methods.

3.3.2 The Peace Corps and E.L.T. in Niger

Founded by President John F. kennedy in 1961 in order to help developing countries in many aspects of their social and economic lives (education, health, agriculture, youth development) the Peace Corps' philosophy is based on the *trip-*

tyc (1) cultural exchange, (2) technical assistance, and (3) sensitization of the American people to how other peoples of the world live (Peace Corps / Niger 1979:2). In Niger, education was the first social sphere to which it brought its 'know how' which indeed contributed to the enhancement of English Language Teaching. The vast majority of these volunteers were University graduates but had no or very little experience of teaching before coming to Niger. Apart from very rare cases of resignations - yearly a couple or so would decide to return to the States - they showed enthusiasm and genuine interest in teaching as well as care for the society within which they worked. As bluntly put by Donaghy a former Niger PCV (Squires 1977:6)

> Now, why is P.C. Niger involved in T.E.F.L.? We are here on the invitation of the government to alleviate an existing need which cannot at the moment be satisfied by indigenous resources, that is, there are not yet enough Nigerien English teachers to fill all the posts - this is the far off ideal. Native speakers are preferred and P.C. provides them cheaply. Perhaps many of us are inexperienced, but our hang-up is the method (which quickly comes with practice) and not the subject itself. So, here we have the best of all possible worlds with P.C. fulfilling the need for native speaking English teachers.

Unlike the first two groups of teachers referred to, i.e French 'Coopérants', indigenous and African teachers, American Peace Corps volunteers were offered some initial training courses based on theoretical and classroom teaching practices before being assigned to their new posts. In-service training sessions which used to last at least 2 months gathered not only American Peace Corps volunteers (A.P.C.V.s), Nigérien new teachers, but also American and Nigérien experienced teachers. In addition to the pedagogical training, the A.P.C.V.s were also taught the national language of the area where they were to teach. Another opportunity they were given was the immersion period during which the only language in force within the A.P.C.V. group were French and national languages. Finally, the 'live-in' - a period of one to two weeks during which the A.P.C.V. remains in a

given indigenous population - was also part of the training. Hence, before being confronted with his / her own classes the A.P.C.V. had not only had some contact with the society in which s/he was going to live but also a good grasp of the methodology in operation in those days, that is the Audio-Lingual Method, which took roots in Niger thanks to the Peace Corps as pointed out by Gadsden (in Kaba 1978:30)

> The Peace Corps volunteers in the early days of T.E.F.L. were repetiteurs, assistants, teachers of conversation classes because the French and the Africans did not value the aural-oral approach.
>
> ... to a large extent the Peace Corps facilitated the shift from emphasis on translation and written English to spoken English mastery and oral comprehension.

3.3.2.1 The Peace Corps Summer Courses

For many Nigérien students and teachers of English the first real encounter with the Audio-Lingual Method was certainly during the first summer course organised for the A.P.C.V.s by the Peace Corps in the early seventies. It should be said in passing that initially P.C. volunteers' training in Methodology and African languages - including Hausa - was carried out in the United States, and that it was later that it took place in individual countries. In the case of Niger, these summer courses were held for two and a half to three months in the capital. Students from all levels (*sixième* to *terminale*) were recruited for the purpose of constituting the 'Model School'. Pedagogical trainers were mostly American in the early stages of the Model School. However, as each year some Nigérien teachers were allowed to participate as trainees, the training staff later comprised national teachers of English.

Before the beginning of the model school proper, some micro-teaching sessions were organised whereby the new teachers would (1) learn what it took to teach

pupils whose cultures and beliefs were different from theirs, (2) be prepared to deal with large classes, and above all (3) to apply the taught theoretical aspects which by and large pertained to the Audio-Lingual Method.

Table 3.4 — The Peace Corps Staff from 1980 to 1990. Source: Peace Corps Niger

Period	TEFL	P.Ed.	NFE	Univ	Uni/LTA	Maths	P.C.	TEFL/Ad.
1980	49	10	2	-	-	-	-	-
1981	45	–	-	-	-	-	-	-
1982	31	6	5	-	-	-	-	-
1983	29	4	5	-	-	-	-	-
1984	44	6	3	-	-	-	-	-
1885	38	8	3	3	1	-	-	-
1986	39	4	6	3	3	-	-	-
1987	30	3	7	3	4	-	-	-
1988	21	6	4	5	3	4	2	-
1989	13	5	4	4	3	8	5	4
1990	2	2	6	2	1	9	6	5
1991	–	2	4	2	-	-	-	-

3.3.2.2 The A.P.C.V.s and the Audio-Lingual Method

Also known as the Aural-Oral Method, the Audio-Lingual Method (ALM) was mostly founded upon the premise that 'foreign language learning is basically mechanical process of habit formation, that it is more effective if the spoken form precedes the written form, and that analogy is superior to analysis as a basis for acquiring control of linguistic structures' (Cammish cited in Richardson 1983:54-55). Deriving from the 'mim-mem' method (mimicry and memorization) an approach used by the U.S army to teach foreign languages, the Audio-Lingual Method it-

self was developed in the sixties and had many distinctive features that Stern (1983:462) lists as follows:

> (1) separation of the skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing - and the primacy of the audiolingual over the graphic skills; (2) the use of dialogues as the chief means of presenting the language; (3) emphasis on certain practice, techniques, mimicry, memorization, and pattern drills; (4) the use of language laboratory; and (5) establishing a linguistic and psychological theory as basis for the teaching method.

It would not be exaggerated to say that the ALM was disseminated in the system thanks to the A.P.C.V.s through a teaching design called the 'Six Point Lesson' which comprised the following: warm-up, pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing. Because emphasis was laid on the so called 'fundamental skills' listening and speaking, about 2/3 of the learning time was spent on them, as shown in the following lesson format.

- a warm-up session:

It is a short, snappy activity, which helps students get into the mood of work. Basically it is the review of newly covered material; it can be a grammar structure, or lexical items previously studied. In lesson plans it is scheduled to last no more than 5 minutes. Finally since the major pedagogical procedure was to move from the known to the unknown, from easy to difficult, from simple to complex, English lessons always comprise a warm-up.

- a pronunciation lesson:

Generally it lasts 5 minutes and consists of either the presentation of segmental phonemes in lower classes or of suprasegmental phonemes such as stress and intonation in the upper. Regarding the teaching of consonants and vowels it is done through minimal pairs, flash cards, tongue twisters. The tongue twister which is in the next few lines, is the one that Nigérien students find the most difficult to

produce because dealing with the unvoiced and voiced dental segmental phonemes /0/ and /6/, which exist in neither French nor in any of the national languages sounds inventories. This reason leads students to pronounce the first segmental phoneme either /s/ or /t/, and the second either /z/ or /d/.

> The box of thimbles from the Thrifty Thimble Company arrived, as ordered. However, instead of thirty-six thimbles, the box contained only thirty-three thimbles, three thimbles fewer than the thirty-six we had ordered. We wrote to the company, explaining that we had ordered thirty-six, not thirty-three thimbles, and asked them to send us the extra three thimbles at once. They replied saying that they were in error in sending only thirty-three thimbles rather than thirty-six and that they would ship us three additional thimbles immediately (Squires 1979:50).

These pronunciation lessons were very much enjoyed by learners to the extent that the memorized tongue twisters were a source of challenge even outside the classroom.

- a grammar lesson:

The warm-up and the pronunciation lesson are generally followed by either a grammar or a vocabulary lesson. Stemming from the Audi-Lingual Method, grammar lessons are mostly based on drilling that lead students to memorise grammatical structures. Grammar teaching is based on either the inductive or deductive approach alongside a variety of drills ranging from the easiest, i.e substitution drills, to the most difficult that include integration and communicative drills.

The rationale behind these drills which are founded upon repetitions is that they enable the learner to memorise grammatical pattern and thus use language most efficiently – a view which was later criticized by many methodologists and applied linguists amongst whom Wilga Rivers (1964:163 quoted in Richardson 1983:63) who argues that

> language communication involves a relationship between individuals and not merely the memorisation and repetition of phrases and the practising of structures.

The other major principle is that a new grammar structure should always be presented along with a vocabulary known by the students. Finally, timewise, a grammar lesson may last between twenty to thirty minutes, depending on the teacher's lesson plan.

- a vocabulary lesson:

The next stage of the six point lesson deals with teaching meanings of words contained in a text under study. Many techniques have been developed to teach vocabulary without recourse to any other language than English. Visual aids, gestures, mimicry, are used whenever necessary. In upper classes, antonyms, synonyms, paraphrasing, similes, metaphors and their like are employed to explain the meaning of words. It must be said the words are not taught in an isolated fashion but rather in context. Students are asked to come up with model sentences that they themselves write on the blackboard. Again the length of the lesson depends on the teacher's lesson plan.

- a reading session

The aforementioned lessons are followed by the reading of the *résumés* written on the blackboard by the teacher and the students. Besides this form of reading, students may be, on another occasion, asked to read collectively, in rows then individually, a technique which probably takes into account the size of the classroom. It should be mentioned that a technique intended to improve students' fluency in reading is also used at all levels of the system. Known as the Read-and-Look-Up technique it not only enables students to know that sentences are organised in thought groups, but above all read in a natural way.

- a writing sesssion

The last step of the six point lesson as well as the last skill defined by audiolinguists is writing. It is performed in various ways. Students may be asked to copy down in their notebooks the different *résumés*, or in other circumstances do some written exercises or even write essays in higher classes.

Justice should be done to the Peace Corps teaching force by saying that during their stay in Niger, they did not remain stagnant in terms of methodology and stick mainly to the Audio-Lingual Method. Indeed, though proponents of the Audio-Lingual Method, they moved in the eighties towards a teaching that would lead their students to real communication, the ideal found in Communicative teaching approaches.

Furthermore, the Peace Corps did not limit its contribution to staffing and improving the pedagogy used in the teaching of English. Another part of the curriculum, which is not of the least importance, and which has also benefited from the Peace Corps expertise is textbook design. As is indicated in section 3.5.3, Nigérien and Américan P.C. teachers, have designed a series of English textbooks (for the 4 levels of C.E.G.) which students and teachers alike find interesting and useful.

The contribution of this American organization is indeed invaluable, and all that can be done in the present work is to try to capture the importance of the Peace Corps involvement in English Language Teaching in Niger. The innovation that the Peace Corps volunteers brought to the English curriculum indeed positively affected the teaching of English in Niger. With the help of their American counterparts, the indigenous teachers as well as teachers of other nationalities improved their teaching strategies in the following domains thanks to the many seminars they organized:

1 Design of long-range planning which help teachers of English of a given school to progress at about the same pace in the syllabus.

2 Daily lesson plans which are useful not only because they enable teachers to know what they are teaching and where they are 'heading' but they are also a means of obtaining a good classroom control. Another aspect to mention about these daily lesson plans is that in each lesson plan, behavioural objectives are to be stated clearly and means of assessing students understanding of the lesson incorporated.

3 Teachers provide students with a variety of activities within a lesson which result in obtaining more participation on the part of students. In so doing student boredom was somewhat minimized. Teachers have to look at one of the keys to a successful lesson, that is, the teacher-student ratio.

5 As in the Direct Method the teaching is carried out in English. Unlike in the previous methods presented, within a lesson teachers taught the 4 skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing).

Like its predecessor, the then favoured Audio-Lingual Method became, as put by Stern (1983465), the 'whipping boy for all that was wrong with language teaching'. Indeed as in the case of the Direct Method, its theoretical basis was found to be weak; moreover, 'teachers using the audiolingual materials and applying the audiolingual method conscientiously, complained about the lack of effectiveness of the techniques in the long run and the boredom they engendered among students' (Stern, *ibid.*). This is true of teachers teaching higher classes, 3ème and onwards for their students, being young adults, felt frustrated when asked to repeat chorally or even individually. They are supported by authorities such as Nunan (1987:136-144) who argues that language activities taught through the ALM are nothing but the

representation of 'pseudo-commununication' and could not in any circumstances bring about 'genuine communication'.

The lack of appreciation of ALM in upper classes of the first cycle and in the entire second cycle have brought the E.L.T. Advisers and English teachers in Niger to turn towards (a) method(s) that would enable students to participate more efficiently in language classes. Of the various methods devised and developed after the ALM, i.e Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Total Physical Response (TPR), Silent-Way, Suggestopedia, Community Language Learning (CLL), it is the first that the Nigérien English teachers view as the method that suits best the needs of their students, be they from the first or the second cycle. However, we should hasten to add that positive and applicable techniques from other methods are also employed if necessary, an approach known as the eclectic approach.

3.3.3 Communicative Methods

As its name suggests, Communicative Language Learning (CLT) or Functional, or Notional-Functional approach stresses communication as the main purpose for learning a foreign language. It was in effect the social pressures and the sociolinguistic studies of the seventies that led applied linguists to 'consider not linguistic competence as the goal for language learning' but rather *communicative competence* (Hymes, 1971, Campbell and Wales, 1970 cited in Brumfit & Roberts, 1984:85) as the aim for language learning. Language is 'first and foremost a vehicle for communicating meanings and structure exists only to serve those meanings'. In the same vein Page (cited in Richardson 1981:31) notes:

> The context of meaning is usually a sociolinguistic one: that is, the sorts of language used are dictated by the situations in which human beings find themselves when using them. A plain imperative "Sit down" may be appropriate in one social situation and entirely inappropriate in another. A knowledge of grammar, knowledge of language structure, does not tell a learner how to use language in particular

situations.

In other words, the method will equip the learner with 'a knowledge of how sentences are used in the performance of communicative acts of different kinds' (Brumfit & Johnson *ibid.*), since as put by Hymes (cited by Page:*ibid.*), 'there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless'. This approach may be regarded not only as 'a reaction against the view of language as a set of structures' but also as 'a reaction towards a view of language as communication, a view in which meaning and the uses to which language is put play a central role' (Brumfit & Johnson 1979:3). Thus it is a shift of focus from 'the sentence as the basic unit in language teaching to the use of sentences in combination' (Widdowson quoted by Brumfit & Johnson 1979:50).

As to how CLT is used in Niger, it is useful first to point out that two lines may be taken in Communicative Language Teaching. The first version which, according to Howatt (1984:279),

> has become more or less standard practice in the last ten years, stresses the importance of providing learners with opportunities to use their English for communicative purposes and, characteristically, attempts to integrate such activities into a wider programme of language teaching.

The second version of CLT which is viewed as the 'weak' approach whereby non-communicative and communicative activities may be reconciled inasmuch as 'such things as drills and controlled practice have a valid place in the language class as pre-communicative activities which provide learners with the necessary prerequisite skills for more communicative language work (Littlewood (1981) cited in Nunan 1987:136-145).

English teachers in Niger by and large subscribe to the second approach of Communicative Language Teaching. The supremacy of the first two skills, listening

and writing, being overlooked, it may be said that all four skills are viewed as complementary but integrative skills. The nature of the language in Niger, i.e the foreign character that English has, makes it very difficult if not impossible for students and teachers alike to practise all of the time genuine communication which according to Nunan (1987:140).

> is characterized by the uneven distribution of information, the negociation of meaning (through, for example, clarification requests and confirmation checks), topic nomination and negociation by more than one speaker, and the right of interlocutors to decide whether to contribute to an interaction or not. In other words, in genuine communication, decisions about who says what to whom and when are up for grabs.

The most occurring pattern of classroom interaction is based on (1) teacher initiation, (2) learner response, (3) teacher follow-up based on the 'weak' interpretation of communicative interaction, which according to Nunan (1987:141) accepts the value of grammatical error correction, and drill.

A study conducted by Nunan (*ibid.*) on 'the degree to which features of genuine communication were present in language classes' revealed the following result, which is comforting for users of English as a Foreign Language:

> there is a growing body of classroom-based research which supports the conclusion reached here, that there are comparatively few opportunities for genuine communicative language use in second-language classrooms [let alone foreign-language classrooms].

Hornsey (1981:8) adds to this that 'there cannot be one best method because there are too many variables at work in the foreign-language class'. There are variables relating to the teacher (personality, knowledge, and orientation), to the teaching conditions (size of the classroom, time of day, availability of teaching materials, and the like), the learners (age, social status), and finally the language itself (language for what?). So 'given only this selection of variables, one must wonder how anyone can advocate one single method of teaching a language in

school'

These reasons have led the English teachers, as hinted earlier, to use approaches from methods like Silent Way or Total Physical Response. The first method which was initiated and developed in the United States by Gattegno, aims to encourage to 'learners to utilize their own inner resources as fully as possible' (Brumfit and Roberts 1984:86-87). As its name suggests, there is a part of the class which should remain silent as long as possible, and that is the teacher. He should give students the opportunity to fully use the language. This aspect of the method which is also found in the CLT, is employed by teachers in Niger, to the best of their ability.

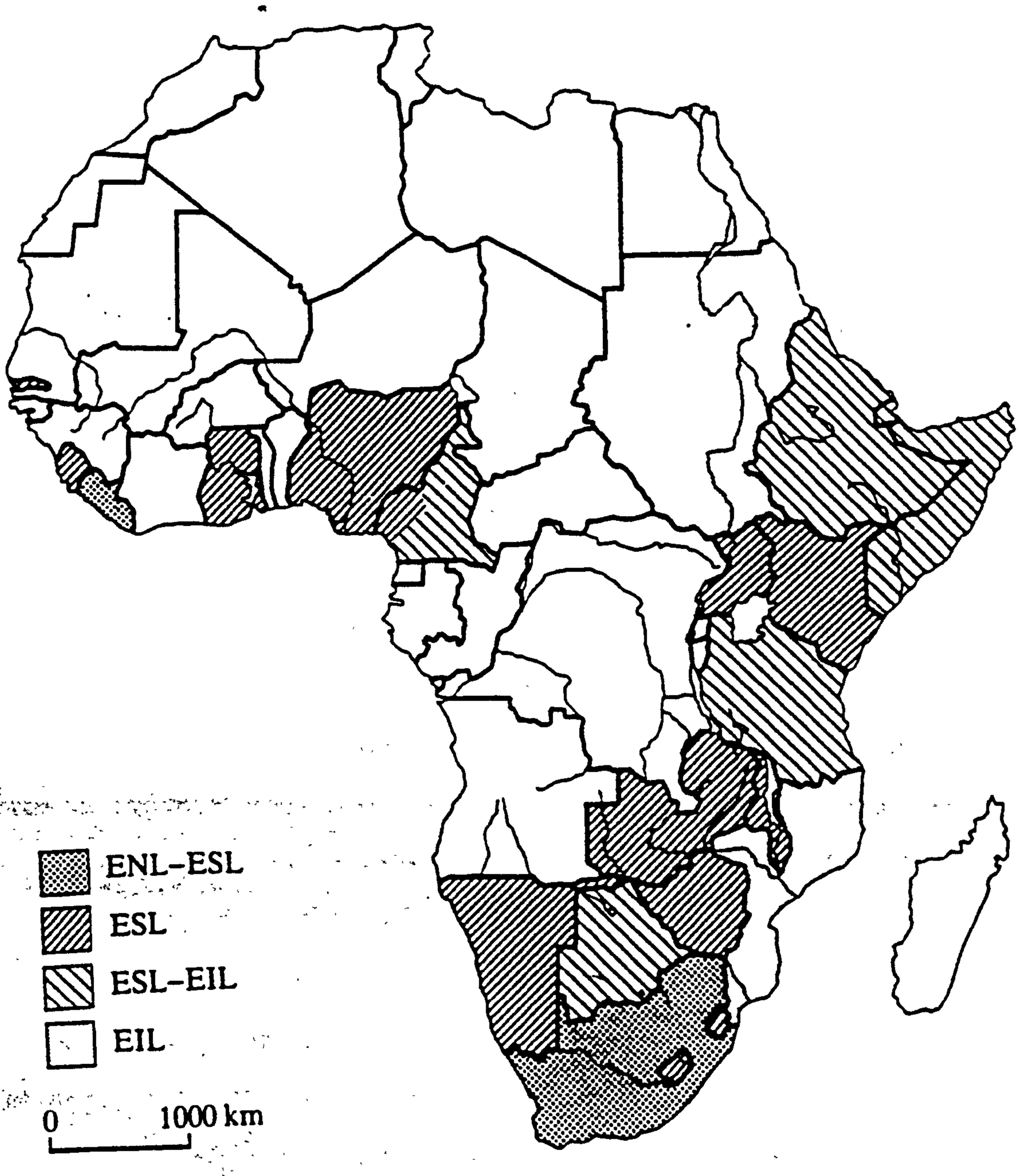
As for Total Physical Response (TPR) it was developed by Asher who regarded language as a 'vehicle for controlling the behaviour of others, or as manipulative instrument'. The central theory behind TPR is encapsulated in the following lines deriving from Asher himself (1977:4)

> language is learned through motor activity for when a child is learning a language there is an intimate relationship between language and the child's body.

Proponents of the TPR strongly believe that by making learners produce language together with physical movements they end up by learning the language successfully. The method in its entirety is not used by teachers in Niger, but they have recourse to its main guidelines when teaching beginners active verbs or lexical items. As suggested by Asher (*ibid.*) many grammar structures of the target language can be learned through an appropriate use of the imperative by the teacher.

Finally, it should be pointed out that because teachers in Niger deal with large classes (i.e up to sixty students) and a syllabus mostly controlled by the central

The Position of English in Africa. In Schmied, J. (1991:44)



ENL: English as a Native Language.

ESL: English as a Second Language.

EIL: English as an International Language.

administration, CCL, a method whereby learners decide what they want to learn and the class is held accordingly, has been overlooked because of its impracticability. Another well publicised method, Suggestopedia has come to the same fate, again for the same reasons as stated above.

3.3.4 Summary

If we remain with Tyler's linear model of the curriculum, i.e objectives, content, pedagogy, evaluation it can be said that all four components of the English curriculum have been constantly 'on the move' because since the advent of the Grammar-Translation Method implemented by the French *coopérants* a lot of water has passed under the Nigérien ELT bridge. To start with the objectives, it may be said that from learning English as an intellectual exercise, or to fulfil some academic requirements, English is today learnt for the sake of communication *per se.* As for the content, the following points may be noted: (1) settings in textbooks which pertain to Britain in the early days, little by little took on the 'local colour'; students start by learning about their own environment, then their immediate environment to expand to the external world; (2) textbooks included not only the *savoir* but also the *savoir faire* and the *savoir être.* Regarding the third component of the curriculum, the teaching has moved away from teaching 'facts about the language, rules and the evidence of the written language' to concentrate on 'language as communication practical skill and the evidence of speech'; students are regarded as being at the heart of the learning process. Finally, the last part of the curriculum, the student assessment, has undergone tremendous change, thanks to the teachers' proposal which was ratified by the Ministers of Education and Higher Education. Indeed, English Language teaching more than any subject of the curriculum has undergone changes, innovations that have led to concrete

results, an issue which it will be discussed in the next sections of this chapter.

3.4 Other Forces Involved in E.L.T. in Niger

3.4.1 The Ghanaian Coopérants and E.L.T.

In spite of all the efforts made by the Faculties of Pedagogy and Letters on the one hand and the Peace Corps's contribution on the other, the shortage of English teachers became very acute to the extent that the government signed a *protocole d' accord* with the Ghanaian authorities in October 1975 (L/004993/MAE/C/DAPC of October 6, 1975). In 1970-1971 for instance there were there were only 3 Nigérien English teachers and 30 non-nationals. Though the agreement was signed in 1975, it was only in 1977 that the Ghanaian 'coopérants' started teaching in Nigérien secondary schools,

In the first period of their teaching experience in Niger, most of them continued teaching English as if it were a second language for the learners, which resulted in disastisfaction on the part of the students. As in Direct Method they taught lessons through English, doing much of the talking which in most cases was a teaching *about the language* not *the language itself.* However, it should be pointed out that it did not take them long to change their *fusil d'épaule*, to change their stance. With the various teachers' meetings, the classroom visits, seminars, they understood the orientations given to ELT in Niger.

For having seen them work in schools it should be said that this South-South cooperation has proven to be satisfactory for both sides. Indeed, they filled in a gap which could have jeopardized most of the efforts deployed by the Ministry to offer an adequate education to the children of the country. As shown in table (3.5) there were more Ghanaian English teachers in 1977-78 than nationals

or all other nationalities combined. Besides the invaluable skills they transmitted to their pupils, they always showed a genuine interest in actively participating in school activities (organisation of English clubs for instance), pedagogical undertakings (*Unités Pédagogiques*, (*vide infra*)), or seminars. The exchange of experience between Ghanaian teachers and other teachers was very fruitful and it would be doing them justice to say that many Nigérien new teachers of English have taken advantage of their Ghanaian counterparts' knowledge of the English language to enhance theirs.

Table 3.5 — English Teaching Staff from 1977 to 1990. (Source D.E.S.T./M.E.N.;1992

Academic Year	Nationals	Ghanaians	Others	Total
1977-1978	26	44	39	109
1980-1981	46	40	48	144
1985-1986	153	34	43	230
1987-1988	301	32	10	343
1988-1989	356	29	12	397

Ghanaian teachers throughout the lifetime of their contracts were found to be hard working and conscientious teachers. Their expertise had been not only useful to their students but also to their Nigérien counterparts. However, with the rapid growth of the national English staff teaching force which by 1990 became self-sufficient, the Nigéro-Ghanaian cooperation in the field of education came to an end.

3.4.2 Contribution of the University

Among the contributors to the expansion of E.L.T. in Niger, it is the Univer-

sity which undoutedly has played a key role. Two major reasons may be advanced to support this view: (1) the Faculties of Letters and Pedagogy both trained the prospective lycée and C.E.G. teachers, respectively, and thus have enabled the ministry to be self-sufficient in national teachers of English; (2) the training at the Faculty of Pedagogy has enabled the Ministry to employ qualified teachers. It should be pointed out that though the mission of the Faculty of Letters is not to train teachers, the English department of that Faculty is the only one to offer T.E.F.L. and Applied Linguistics courses. Kaba (1978:44) notes that the T.E.F.L. U.V (Unité de Valeur) began in October 1976 and was thus planned:

> this course will be structured as a practicum in which students will work and do peer teaching from the classe de sixième textbook called: *English for French Speaking Africa*, Mills, Zodeougan, and Doust, Armand Colin, 1971. Recent films on English teaching will be viewed and discussed, but the main thrust of the course will be actual work with teaching materials. Students not already teaching English in a C.E.G or elsewhere will be required to establish a relationship with a teacher of English in the schools and spend specified amounts of time in visitation, consultation and teaching classes ...

Since then, T.E.F.L. and Applied Linguistics have been taught and this is highly significant for most of the students graduating from the Faculty of Letters become Lycée teachers. In other words, only students from the Department of English have been in contact with schools before their appointments - which indeed is a positive point. The others discover teaching methodology only once in the field.

Needless to say all students (no matter which is their department) graduating from the Faculty of Pedagogy undergo initial training of one form or another. Prospective English teachers from the Faculty of Pedagogy take part in at least two distinct training sessions which occur in the various schools of the capital. They leave the Faculty, well equipped to teach English. In effect, initial training is conducted in such a way that at the end of the training students satisfy the following teacher profile:

- Proficiency in spoken as well as written English;
- Aptitude to employ efficiently T.E.F.L. approaches and methods;
- Awareness of the Anglo-American cultures;
- Ability to adopt himself/herself to classroom situations;
- Readiness to share experience with other teachers;
- Awareness of adolescents' psychology;
- Aptitude to show at all times an irreproachable professional conscience.

3.4.3 USAID and the American Cultural Centre's Contribution

Two other American organizations, the American Cultural Centre and USAID/Niger, have immensely contributed and continue to contribute in the education of Nigérien English Language teachers. The American Cultural Centre is first of all an indispensable resource centre for teachers of English in a country where literature in English is scarce. Besides the multiple seminars it has organized to enhance English teachers' performances, the American Cultural Centre is also known for having offered many Nigérien teachers of English the opportunity to broaden their horizons through short term courses in the United States. Furthermore, it should be noted that the American Cultural Centre also puts its services at the disposal of many nationals and non-nationals whose aim it is to learn or brush up their English.

USAID/Niger financed a series of workshops entitled "English for English Teachers", workshops for C.E.G. teachers.. The objectives of these 're-training' sessions are encapsulated in the folowing lines which are excerpts from the 1986 Final Report (Peace Corps 1986:2):

> Specifically, trainees were expected to: (1) speak in English during workshop classes and activities; (2) teach a 10-minute lesson to their colleagues; (3) write three essays, one for each week of the workshop; and (4) read three novels, one for each week of the workshop, and give an oral presentation on the novel to their colleagues.

Thus, in 1985 thirty C.E.G. teachers were involved in an in-service training session organized in Niamey. The workshop sessions which lasted about a month were estimated at 1.152.000 CFA francs (1 FF = 50 CFA).

In 1986 the in-service training sessions became regional and took place simultaneously in three different localities: Niamey with 25 teachers; Tahoua region was offered 15 places and Zinder region 25 teachers, which makes a total of 65 teachers. It is noted in the Final report (1986:2) that 'to expedite the fulfillment of the [objectives of the workshops] and other expectations, the following materials were given (for the permanent use of the trainees) at the 3 workshop sites: two books of methodologies for teaching English; a book of English-language idioms; a book of diversions for the English classroom; and an all-English dictionary donated by the U.S. Information Service'. The cost was estimated at 11.650.000 CFA francs.

The following year, seventy seven teachers were given the opportunity to attend the USAID regional in service-training sessions in Niamey (31 teachers) and Maradi (46 teachers).

Besides these in-service training sessions run with the help of USAID, this United States organization offered short term (one month) T.E.F.L. / University of Berkeley summer courses. Thus, in 1987 3 teachers were granted scholarships to attend these courses, and two others two years later. Finally, nine people were awarded scholarships leading to Ph.D in Applied Linguistics (4 teachers), M.Sc. in T.E.F.L./T.E.S.L. (4 teachers), and M.Sc in Administration (1 recipient). These 9 people are being trained for the English Departments of the Faculties of Letters

and Pedagogy.

3.4.4 The British Council Contribution

It would be too pretentious to attempt to give a detailed account of the British Council contribution to E.L.T. in Niger, a topic so vast to be thoroughly discussed in this section of the thesis. However, as Nigérien people say 'a good gesture should never be kept secret', and for the sake of conciseness, this section will be limited to a summary of the British Council intervention in E.L.T. in Niger.

The British Council has been intervening in E.L.T. Niger since the 1970s. From that period up to the mid 1980s many teachers were provided with scholarships not only to brush up their English but also attend refresher courses in T.E.F.L. Furthermore, second year students at the Faculty of Letters were also offered 9 month scholarships to improve their English and be acquainted with E.F.L teaching techniques and methods. The educational institution which was in charge of training both Nigérien teachers of English and second year university students was Colchester English Study Centre (C.E.S.C.) in Essex.

It is noteworthy, that this teacher development organized by the British Council was accompanied by the appointment of a British E.L.T. adviser, whose duty it was to help the nationals in curriculum development, as well as to train prospective teachers. Mr. William Candler, was an asset for both I.N.D.R.A.P. and the University.

In 1986, a two phased project called *Projet britannique* was conceived. The first part of the project dealt with pre-service training at the Faculty of Letters and Pedagogy, and the second part is in connection with teacher development. Thus, as put by Fisher, Head of the *Projet Britannique* and E.L.T. Adviser at

Table 3.6 — Nigérien Staff trained by the British Council between 1987 and 1992: Source: The British Council Abidjan

Academic Year	Area of Study	Length	Recipients	Institutions
1987-1988	E.L.T	3 Months	15	C.E.S.C
1988-1989	M.A/Appl/Lin.	11 Months	1	Essex Univ.
	M.A/T.E.S.O.L	12 Months	1	Wales
	E.L.T	9 Months	8	C.E.S.C
1989-1990	M.Ed / E.L.T	12 Months	2	St Mark & Johns
	M.A/Appl/Lin.	11 Months	1	Essex Univ.
	M.A / E.L.T	12 Months	1	Leeds Univ.
	Ph.D in Ed.	3 Years	2	Leeds & Durham
	E.F.L/ E.L.T	12 Months	10	West Sussex & Edinburgh
1990-1991	Ph.D in Ed.	3 Years	2	Warwick & Essex
	B.Phil.Ed.	12 Months	1	Marjons
	M.Ed.	12 Months	3	Warwick & Leeds
	Dip. Ed.	12 Months	1	WISHE
	B.Ed.	12 Months	2	Moray House
1991-1992	B.Ed.	12 Months	3	Moray House
	M.A	12 Months	3	Durham / Warwick
	T.E.F.L	3 Months	1	Marjons

I.N.D.R.A.P. (Interview 1991),

> the main objective is to try and improve the efficiency of English Language teaching in the country at secondary level and at university level, both at the Faculté des Lettres and the Faculté de Pédagogie. And in order to facilitate the job of improving E.L.T., the project has built into it a number of elements such as the ODA book aid ...., and scholarships.

It is also thanks to the Projet Britannique that secondary inspectorates and *lycées* all over the country were equipped with reprographic machines. Finally, it should be emphasized that, if today English is the subject which has far more

advisers than any other subject, it is certainely owing to the scholarships that the British Council offered the best English teachers to further their training in the United Kingdom (see table 3.6).

3.4.5 The Belgian Contribution

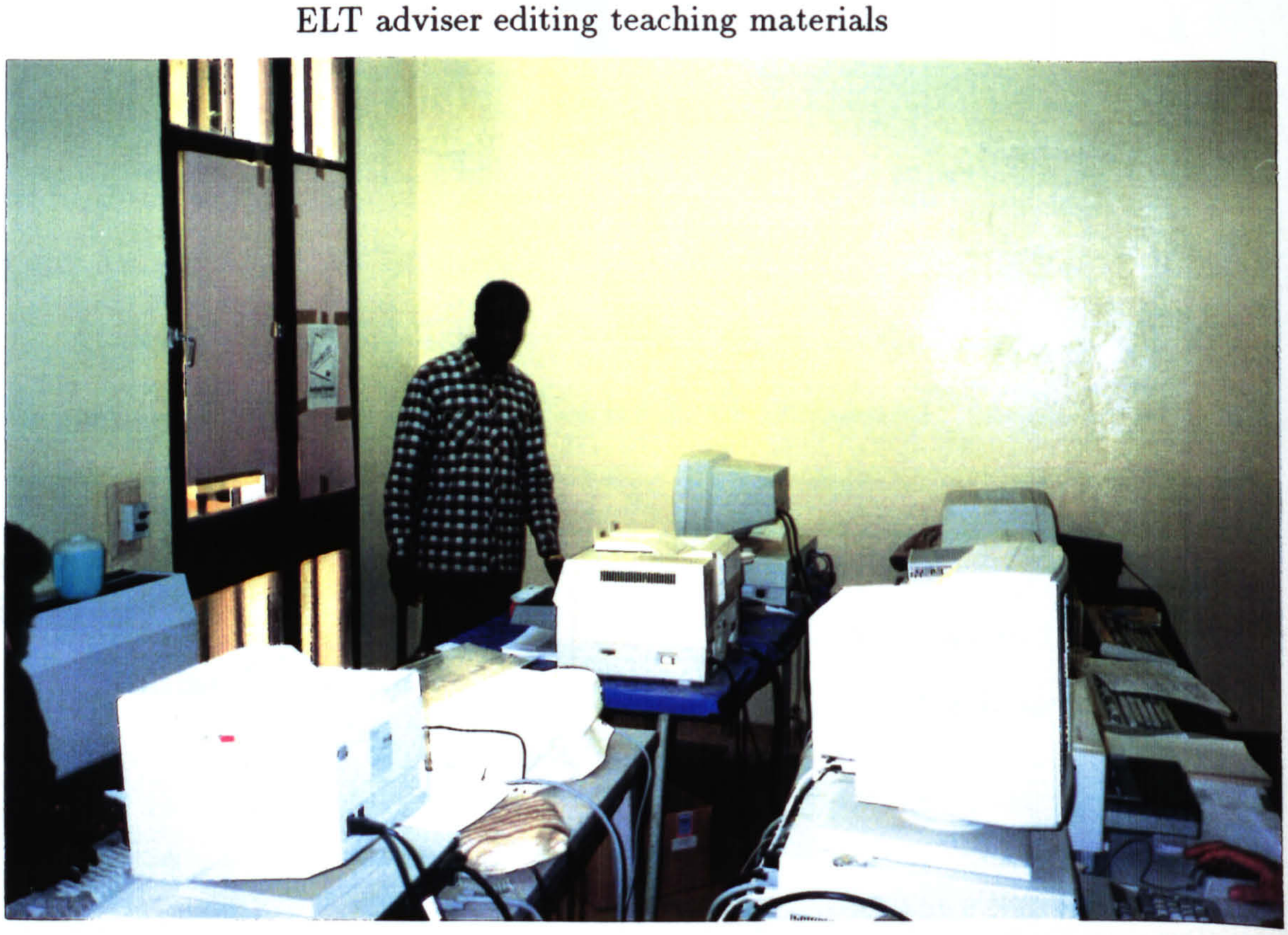
Amongst the phases of the Nigéro-Belgian co-operation, one is of interest to the present study. As a matter of fact, this co-operation involved a phase named *Volet Faculté de Pédagogie de Niamey* whose main objective was the development of the initial training of subject teachers (French, Mathematics, History and Geography, English, Science and so forth) for the first cycle. This objective was achieved through the training of Nigérien staff at the Faculté de Pédagogie in Belgium. Of the current Faculté de Pédagogie lecturers trained at a doctoral level in Belgium were two former lycée English teachers. In short the Belgian contribution to E.L.T. is important, not to mention its impact on the curriculum.

3.4.6 Summary

From the reviewing of the contributions made to English Language Teaching in Niger, one can see that the forms of assistance were not only numerous and varied but were also the cornerstone of all innovations undertaken in the field of E.L.T. Of all subjects of the curriculum, English is undoubtedly the one which has been the concern of many countries and international organizations. However, it should be mentioned that the *Projet Britannique* – the last remaining E.L.T. project in the country – came to an end on the 15th of July 1992, leaving its achievements in the hands of teachers, advisers and University lecturers that it trained in the United Kingdom.

ELT Advisers and teachers: experience sharing

ELT adviser editing teaching materials



3.5 Innovations in English Language Teaching

So far an attempt has been made to provide a panorama of the development of E.L.T. in Niger through a synoptic description of the four components which, as suggested by Tyler, constitute the curriculum. This survey suggests that E.L.T. did not remain static, but on the contrary, had undergone certain transformations, or changes thanks to internal and external factors already referred to. It remains now to probe the nature of these changes and their impact on the English curriculum. However, before delving into such a consideration, it is propitious at this stage to examine, albeit in a summary fashion, some of the issues appertaining to educational change / innovation and the *meaning* of educational change in particular.

3.5.1 A Semantic View of Change and Innovation

People in everyday conversation interchangeably employ change and innovation, to mean that the matter they are referring to is no longer as before; indeed, 'things' as put by Morrish (1976:15) 'never just stay as they are, they change whether they improve or decay'. Furthermore, it is through change that societies ensure their development and perpetuate their history and culture. No matter the quarter where it takes place, innovation or change remain a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon.

If in practice change and innovation share the same meaning, in terms of conceptualization they may be regarded as two distinct notions. Seen from that angle, change may be given a retrospective connotation. It is viewed as a "process" phenomenon taking progressively place over a certain period of time - as a result of external factors' (Dalin 1978). Dalin also suggests that change is a 'systemic

phenomenon' involving various interests of an economic, political and social nature.

Innovation then would differ from change in that it has a prospective connotation justified in the following explanation provided by Morrish (1976:22):

> it is more planned, deliberate, routinised and willed than change which tends to be spontaneous.

Another view that contrasts change and innovation within a definition is expressed by Rudduck (1991:50)

> Schools and classsrooms are likely to be in a constant state of development. Development rests on small change events, none of which is threatening in itself to the whole structure; on the contrary, each event, though it acts as a minute impulse for change, confirms the known past. Innovation is different: it is conscious, planned, and involves some fundamental breaks with the known past. In referring to 'innovation' I have in mind something that, if realized, would require of those involved a substantial shift from the pattern of their present practices.

Put simply, an innovation is a plan for actions whose aims, amongst many others, would bring about change that would improve a sphere of the society, or in the case of the present study - school. Because planned, it has aims and objectives and thus can be evaluated.

Morrison and Ridley (1988:25) suggest that like change, innovation is characterized by its complexity, especially when one is to provide the following questions with answers:

- 'Innovation for whom? (Not everyone might benefit from the change; one person's benefit is another's loss in curriculum management).
- Innovation by whom? (Who has the power, legitimacy and credibility to initiate, implement and support change?)
- Who has to change? (Change can upset power hierarchies)
- What has to change? (A school's aims and philosophies, organisations and ad-

ministration, roles and role relationships, curriculum aims, content, pedagogy, resources, evaluation).

Needless to say these questions will be addressed in turn in due course, though already answers have been implicitly secured to the first question.

There are several problems which innovators face when implementing change. As already hinted there are various types of barriers attempting to stop innovations to happen. In effect, because 'change involves the adaptation or abandon of practices that are familiar and therefore comfortable' (Rudduck 1991:30) many people categorically oppose it to the amazement of the innovators who at times may be at the roots of this resistance. This is so because aims and objectives may not be clearly defined, or lack of constructive communication between the innovators and those who are to implement the innovation and so forth, which undoubtedly lead the latter to question the soundness of the innovation. Barriers to fruitful innovation are conceptualized by Stenhouse (1975:211-2) in terms of 'gaps' impeding communication and understanding. Thus, in the educational milieu – which is the one of concern here, up to 8 gaps have been identified by Jung (1967) quoted in Stenhouse (*ibid.*):

(1) Gap between the teacher or school staff and the resource: persons who are experts;

(2) Gap between the teacher or school staff and the resource: organized bodies of knowledge such as theories and research findings;

(3) Gap between the teacher or school staff and the resource: innovations of other teachers and persons who work with youth;

(4) Gap between the teacher or school staff and the resource: administrators in

their system;

(5) Gap between the teacher or school staff and the resource: other youth socializing systems such as organized recreation, therapeutic agencies, or families;

(6) Gap between the teacher or school staff and the resource: pupils with whom they relate;

(7) Gap between one teacher's way of trying to help a child and the resource: another person's different way of trying to help the same child;

(8) Gap between the teacher's application of skills and the resource: the teacher's own potential.

At the centre of all theses various types of gaps stands the teacher. Indeed, for any (curriculum) innovation to survive and be successful teachers ought to be deeply involved, for as expressed by Hoyle (1969:230)

> for any curriculum innovation to become an effective improvement on an existing practice it must 'take' with the school and become fully institutionalized. Genuine innovation does not occur unless teachers become pesonally committed to ensuring its success'.

Fullan and Stiegelbaur (1991:29) concur with the same view categorizing innovation in *first-order changes* and *second order changes* which they thus define: '*First-order changes* are those that improve the efficiency and and effectiveness of what is currently done, "without disturbing the basic organizational features, without substantially altering the way that children and adults perform their roles"'. As for the second type of innovation, it 'seeks to alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together, including new goals, structures, and roles (e.g., collaborative work culture'). The following lines encapsulate their view regarding the success or failure of changes.

> most reforms foundered on the rocks of flawed implementation. Many were

> diverted by the quiet but persistent resistance of teachers and administrators who, unconvinced by the unvarnished cheer of reformers, saw minimal gain and much loss in embracing second-order changes boosted by those who were unfamiliar with the classroom as a workplace. Thus first order changes succeeded while second order changes were either adapted to fit what existed or sloughed off, allowing the system to remain essentially untouched. The ingredients change, the Chinese saying goes, but the soup remains the same (Cuban, 1988b:343).

Finally, it goes without saying that any innovation needs not only teachers' support but also financial and material support, without which it is bound to die before even 'hatching'.

Having thus summarily presented some of the major issues pertaining to innovation / change which are of use to this study, this section has to be concluded by clearly stating the ground on which the two terms will be employed. Because the next part of this chapter deals with practical, concrete aspects of change in a specific educational sphere *viz.* the English curriculum, the conceptualized differences will be put aside. Thus the clear-cut dichotomy views of *change* and *innovation* will be jettisoned at this stage inasmuch as both terms cater for attempts to enhance education *per se*, be it in the field of teacher education, curriculum development, methodology, student assessment and so forth. Bearing in mind that the two expressions will be used interchangeably, we will in the next part of this chapter attempt to answer the four questions asked by Morrison and Ridley (1988:25) namely, "Innovation for whom and by whom?" and "Who, what has to change?" in the context of E.L.T. in Niger. Finally, some of the major innovations implemented in E.L.T. will be explored and cursorily assessed, since evaluation of innovation *per se* is not the brief of the present work.

3.5.2 Inception of Innovation in the English Curriculum

Throughout this chapter, it was shown that English Language Teaching did

not remain stagnant in Niger in terms of the components that characterize the curriculum (*vide supra*). The objectives for teaching English in Niger have changed from learning English as an intellectual activity to learning it for the sake of communication. In terms of pedagogy, teachers have experienced many methods and approaches publicised in the E.L.T. arena, and continue to seek all possible avenues that would enhance their teaching. The English syllabus itself is still undergoing changes leading to the fulfilment of the set objectives. The last point to refer to, and by no means the least, is related to teaching staff. It is worth noting already at this stage that teachers and English Language advisers have been the *cheval de bataille* of the various innovations implemented in E.L.T. As noted by Hoyle (1972c:24 cited in Stenhouse 1975:144) the reasons why the teacher's role is important in the innovation process are threefold:

(1) He can be independently innovative at the classroom level;

(2) He can act as a 'champion' of an innovation among his colleagues;

(3) Ultimately, it is the teacher who has to operationalize on innovation at the class level.

3.5.3 Initiation Agent

Fullan and Stiegelbauer's (1991:54) observation that 'initiation of change never occurs without an advocate' is indeed applicable to innovations that occurred in the Nigérien educational domain. In effect, most of the educational innovations that took place in Niger in the past 10 years were triggered off by the National Debate on Education (held in Zinder March 22 to 31st 1982). The participants came to the conclusion that imperative innovative measures had to be taken to improve the gloomy and dismal picture of the educational system. The

final report, officially known as *La Déclaration de Zinder* (C.N.D. 1982:3-15) lays the emphasis on, amongst others, the following points:

- the readjustment of the financing of education to our real economic capacities, and above all;

- a readaptation of teaching to the cultural and environmental realities and needs of the Nigérien learner, which implies a reshuffle of the entire curriculum from primary upwards, given what has been already said of the curriculum in this and previous chapters.

This second point is of much interest here because it is the one which led to reconsidering the textbooks in use in those days, the training of teachers, the syllabus content, and the student evaluation. The *Déclaration de Zinder* final report also suggested that I.N.D.R.A.P. be the custodian of all the innovations to be implemented. However, it should be noted that as far as E.L.T. is concerned the National Debate had just confirmed the orientations that the English Departments of I.N.D.R.A.P. and the University and the teachers had secured for E.L.T. in Niger. In effect, in the early 1980s teachers and advisers of English institutionalized the *mini-journée pédagogique* a form of 'action research day' in the course of which all English teachers, of either a given school or more, gather with the view to observing voluntary teachers present lessons of common interest. The lesson observations are immediately followed by a discussion (not a critic) session. The lesson presenters are the first to express their feelings as to how the lessons went and why they went that way. Then every single participant is free to comment on the lesson by coming up with constructive suggestions. But this is not the only aim of *mini-journée pédagogiques.* English advisers seize these opportunities to build up teachers' practical and theoretical E.L.T. knowledge.

Another innovation implented and institutionalized before the National Debate on Education is the creation of a "Pedagogical Unit" – for each subject – in each school. As the expression suggests, the English Pedagogical Unit, for instance, encompasses all the teachers of that subject. Their aims within the 'unit' is to work out together ways and means (pedagogical and social) which would make them improve not only their teaching, but the school as a whole. The *journées pédagogiques* coupled with the activities of the teachers (long range planning, exam subjects designed for all students of the same levels), may enable one to say that action research in its true sense is being carried out by English teachers. As explained by Kemmis and Henry (1984) (quoted in Lomax (1989:29) action research is

> a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social (including educational) situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of (a) their own social or educational practices, (b) their understanding of these practices, and (c) the situations in which these practices are carried out. It is most rationally empowering when undertaken by participants collaboratively, though it is often undertaken by individuals, and sometimes in co-operation with 'outsiders'. In education, action research has been employed on school-based curriculum development, professional development, school improvement programs, and systems planning and policy development.

So far, mention has been made of some the innovations which have been implemented before the 'first change agent ', i.e the National Debate on Education. In the academic year 1984-85 the English Department of I.N.D.R.A.P. and the Peace Corps (L / No 00975 / 13 mai 1985 / M.E.N.) planned to design a series of textbooks, centred on the local settings and the eclectic approach, and which would be used in the entire Sahel – thus the title *English for the Sahel*. After a certain number of successful piloting sessions *English for the Sahel* is today a reality thanks to the hard work and perseverence of Nigérien and American teachers and E.L.T. advisers. The significance of such an innovation is twofold: (1) English

Language teachers and advisers have achieved before any other subject teachers one of the goals set by the National Debate, i.e supplying schools with locally designed textbooks which (a) reflect the needs of the Nigérien child and his/her environment, and (b) are cheaper than those ordered abroad; (2) the experience gained by the *English for the Sahel* designers can be shared with others who are writing or intend to write school textbooks. Needless to say the Ministry has warmly welcomed this success of the E.L.T. cadres and has referred to their achievement to show that "things" are happening, are changing.

In most cases, ideas that bring about changes come from classroom observations, *journées pédagogiques* organised by teachers and advisers. Many are the suggestions made by English teachers, which today are the sources of a change of one sort or another. This form of change initiation process is known as the 'bottom-up innovation' for, in the case of E.L.T. in Niger, innovation germinates in the minds of teachers and advisers, who then plan for them to obtain the approval of the policy and decision makers. The Ministry, with respect to innovations undertaken by E.L.T. people has always given not only its consent but also its full support.

In the mid 1980s, for reasons beyond the knowledge of teachers, educational planners or administrators, the then Head of State decided to put an end to the training of subject advisers in all cycles of the education system. The decision created a lot of confusions and as one may expect it hindered inspectorates in their everyday counselling activities. This will remain the case for a couple of years for all subjects with the exception of English. E.L.T. advisers at I.N.D.R.A.P. found a way of offsetting the problem through the appointment of experienced and linguistically competent teachers as *professeurs animateurs.* His or her duty

is by and large the same as those of the E.L.T. adviser: (1) s/he is expected to observe English lessons, (2) to attend meetings of English Pegagogical Units, (3) to write reports on lessons observed; (4) to participate in every seminar held by his/her inspectorate or I.N.D.R.A.P. Thus, each year a list of 5 to 10 prospective *professeurs animateurs* is put for the approval of the Ministry. Those selected followed an intensive training at I.N.D.R.A.P. thanks to the *Projet Britannique* which happened to be in the capable hands of the hard-working and efficient Allestree E. Fisher. Besides the initial training they obtained at I.N.D.R.A.P. most of them were sent to Britain not only to brush up their English but also learn more about methodology. The success of this initiative is today visible for E.L.T. has more advisers than any other subject (Out of 49 Nigérien Advisers, 24 are E.L.T. Advisers). There are inspectorates which have more than two E.L.T. advisers while they lack advisers of History and Geography, or Biology, or Physics, for instance.

3.5.4 Innovative Aspects In Teacher Development

Seminars, *mini journées pédagogiques*, classroom observations, are the three stands on which rest English teachers education. One of the major innovations in teacher education has been the change of attitudes of English Teaching Advisers and Inspectors of English who have ceased to be viewed as "bosses controlling the work of their subordinates". In most cases, the E.L.T. adviser or inspector is not regarded as being at the centre of classroom observations, or in-service training sessions, in short of teacher education.

This change of attitude is indeed very important inasmuch as traditional ways of observing teachers caused problems for teachers and trainees. As put by William (1989:85) 'they tend to be judgemental, relying on a trainers' subjective

Table 3.7 — Teaching Staff in the First and Second Cycle (D.E.S.T. / M.E.N. 1991: 24-25)

School Subjects	First Cycle	Second Cycle	Total
French	107	73	180
French Hist & Geog	418	NA	418
History & Geography	86	72	152
English	341	60	401
Mathematics	165	57	262
Maths Biology	162	NA	162
Maths Physics	155	NA	155
Arabic	27	37	59
Domestic Science	12	6	18
Drawing (fac.)	–	4	4
Biology	42	46	88
Physics	5	59	64
Phys/Chemis/Biology	90	NA	90
Phys. Education	121	23	144
Spanish	NA	4	4
German	NA	1	1
National Service *	110	85	195
Total	1849	549	2488

* Comprise teachers of various subjects.

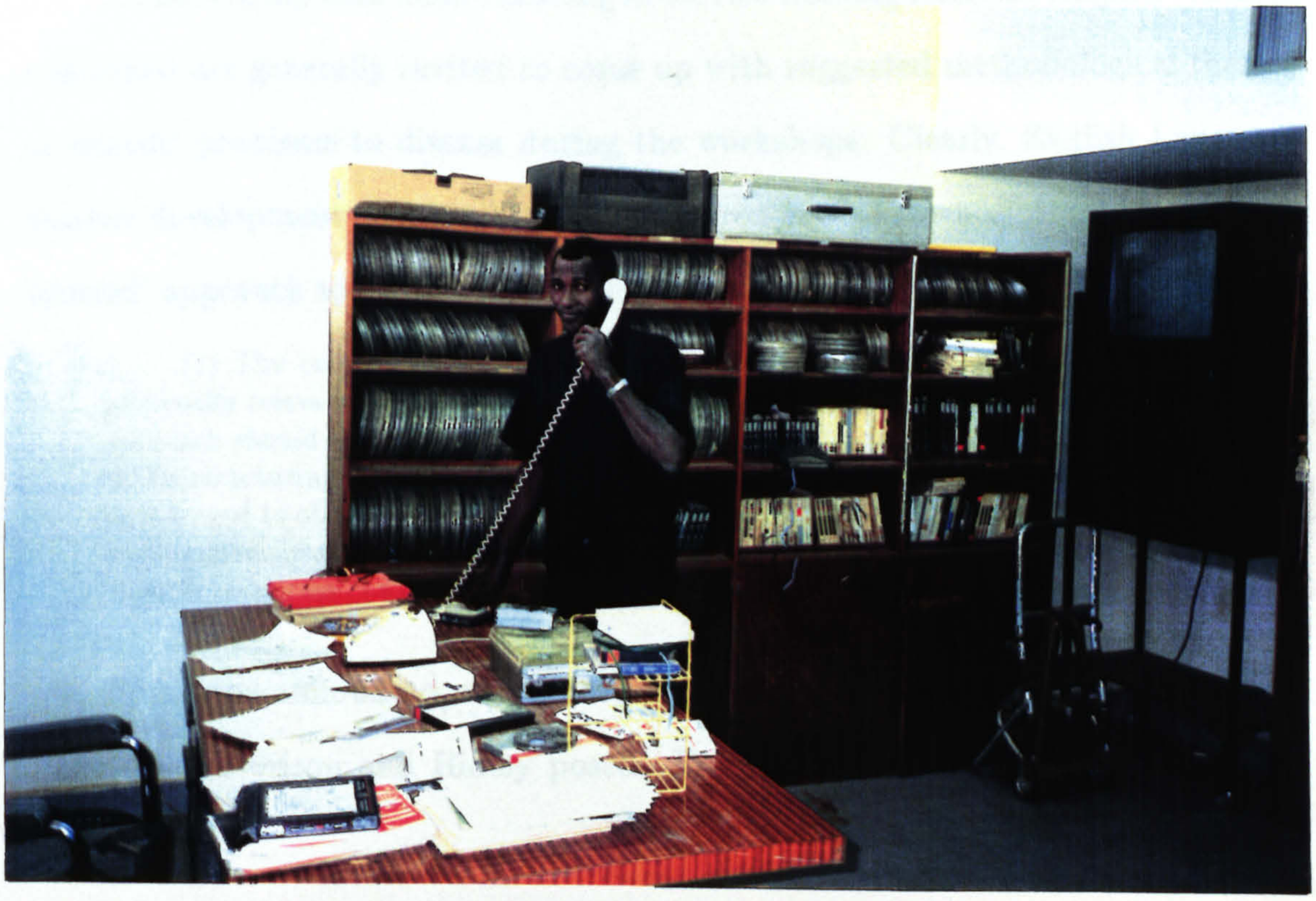
judgements rather than developmental, developing the teacher's ability to assess his/her own ability".

E.L.T. advisers and inspectors closely abide by the following points developed by William (1989:86-7) during their classroom visits:

- Development: the visits should aim to develop the teacher's own judgements

English Pedagogical Units at work

La Voix de l' Enseignement Section



about what is going on in their own classrooms;

- Limited focussed content: we should not tackle too much in one visit, but rather focus on one or two items, depending on the teacher's needs;
- Teacher centredness: we should try to allow the teacher to take much of the responsibility of the observation. The purpose of the visit should also be discussed with the teachers, so that they are involved in the rationale behind them;
- Future development: we should try to leave the teacher with an instrument for self-development after the course;
- Positiveness: The visit should be *helpful* not *destructive.* We should stress on the positive aspects of the lesson, what went well, and build on these.
- Flexibility: The tutor should be able to be flexible and respond to the teacher in post-observation discussion.

It noteworthy that before holding in-service training sessions, English teachers concerned are generally invited to come up with suggested methodological themes or specific problems to discuss during the workshops. Clearly, English Language teacher development encapsulates all the ingredients of teacher-centred, or 'client-centred' apporach to use Nunan's (1989:112) terminology, according to which

> (1) The content of methodology of workshops should be perceived as being personally relevant to participant ...; (2) theory should drive from practice ...; (3) the approach should be bottom-up rather than top-down; (4) teachers should be involved in the structuring of the professional development programme; (5) teachers should be encouraged to observe, analyse, and evaluate their own teaching; and (6) professsional development programmes should provide a model for teachers of the practices they wish to encourage, i.e., they should practice what they preach.

Finally as announced, we will try to answer the questions related to innovations that Morrison and Ridley posed. From what has been said so far it may

be advanced that the innovations that are taking place in the English curriculum are destined by both teachers and advisers as well as administrators involved in the field of E.L.T. As to the initiators of these innovations it has been shown that again both teachers and advisers are their source.

Chapter IV

FIELDWORK ORGANIZATION AND EXECUTION

> Fieldwork is... a complex interaction between researcher and hosts and is constructed in a process of give-and-take (or exchange and reciprocity) and so it cannot be assimilated toward the model of a biomedical experiment where the researcher is free to outline what is to be done to the passive subjects. **(Wax 1980:273)**

As stated in the introductory section of the present study, the fieldwork we carried out is mostly based on empirical inquiry into the views of pupils, teachers, inspectors for secondary education, policy makers in the Ministry and last but not least, representatives of the Pupils Parents Association.

In order to undertake this empirical investigation four types of research instruments have been employed: *questionnaires*, *interviews*, *classroom observations* and *archival records study*. Thus, the methodology is as such a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, leading to triangulation, a research technique depicted in the following terms by Cohen & Manion (1989:269-70)

> Triangulation may be defined as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour. [...] Triangular techniques in the social science attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint and, in so doing, by making use of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Another similar view of triangulation is that of Denzin (1978a:28), quoted in Patton (1987:61) for whom the logic of triangulation is based on the premise that

> no single method ever adequately solves the problem of rival causal factors... Because each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality, multiple methods of observations must be employed. This is termed triangulation. I now offer as a

> final methodological rule the principle that multiple methods should be used in every investigation.

Then it goes without saying, that employing a multimethod approach in social sciences research offers more advantages than using a single method. This assertion is also supported by Cohen and Manion (*ibid.*) who argue that a single approach in social sciences would only offer a 'very limited view of the complexity of human behaviour and of situations in which human beings interact.' These two authorities put forth two triangulation method advantages which may be summed up as follows:

> The more the methods contrast with each other, the greater the researcher confidence. Furthermore, the use of a multimethod approach minimizes 'the chances that any consistant findings are attributable to similarities of methods.'

The use of triangulation helps to overcome the problem of 'method-boundedness', which is thus explained by Boring (in Cohen & Manion, 1989:270):

> as long as a new construct has only the single operational definition that it received at birth, it is just a construct. When it gets two alternative operational definitions, it is beginning to be validated. When the defining operations, because of proven correlations, are many, then it becomes reified.

In the course of the survey, over 1700 secondary school pupils, 133 secondary school teachers, 12 officials of the Ministry and two members of the Pupils Parents Association were sampled. These informants were scattered in 5 administrative regions or Départements out of the 8 that exist in the country. It should be noted that the survey took over six months to complete and involved 5000 miles of travelling.

Finally, we should not fail to point out that besides the usual objectives that such a chapter ought to fulfil, namely to discusss the nature and the sources of the

data, the present section also attempts to give a synoptic account of how familiarity (Delamont, Goodson, Becker cited in Burgess 1985) – i.e the various personal or interpersonal problems occurring when undertaking research in a familiar (known) environment – was fought during the fieldwork, and what lessons were to be drawn from the research.

4.1 Areas and Sampling Procedures

As put by Burroughs (1971:58), 'all sampling upon which generalization is proposed, depends ultimately upon the principles of random selection' and our study is no exception to this rule. The objective behind the above mentioned principles is to obtain samples without bias, i.e offer each and every individual of the population the same chance of being selected as every other individual. Needless to say many techniques deriving from random sampling were employed.

4.1.1 Selections of Areas

Since the population of our study (see section 4.2) is to be found almost all over the country, for reasons related to the specificity of the investigation, we started by stratifying the parent population into categories based on existing strata such as the *actual administrative structures*, and *location*. For the sake of clarity, it should be noted that sampling on ethnic grounds was outright rejected because of the sensitivity pertaining to such an issue. Instead, the administrative divisions have been favoured. Henceforth, the country is administratively structured in 8 main regions or 'Départements'; each of which encompasses a certain number of administrative sub-areas or 'Arrondissements', one or more second and first cycle schools and at least one Inspectorate for Secondary Education.

Having taken into consideration these strata, we then selected Niamey the capital city for the following obvious reasons:

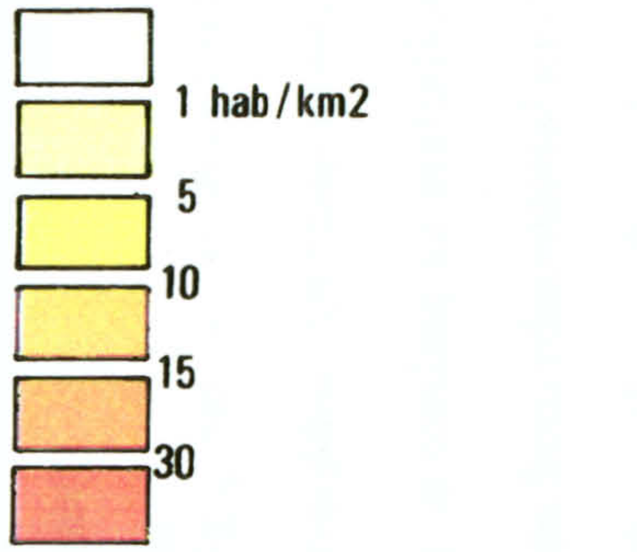
It is a cosmopolitan town with inhabitants from all over the country and from many parts of the world. It is thus impossible to hold the view that because it is located in the western part of the country that it should therefore be labelled as belonging to a specific ethnic group. Furthermore, there is no record of what the ethnic proportions are within Niamey. By selecting Niamey, the advantage is that we are likely to gather samples which may be regarded as representing the whole country, but on a small scale.

Added to this is the all important fact that most of the important educational institutions are located in the capital city. As a matter of fact, the Ministry of National Education, the national University Abdou Moumouni, the National Institute for Educational Research (I.N.D.R.A.P.) and many others are based in Niamey.

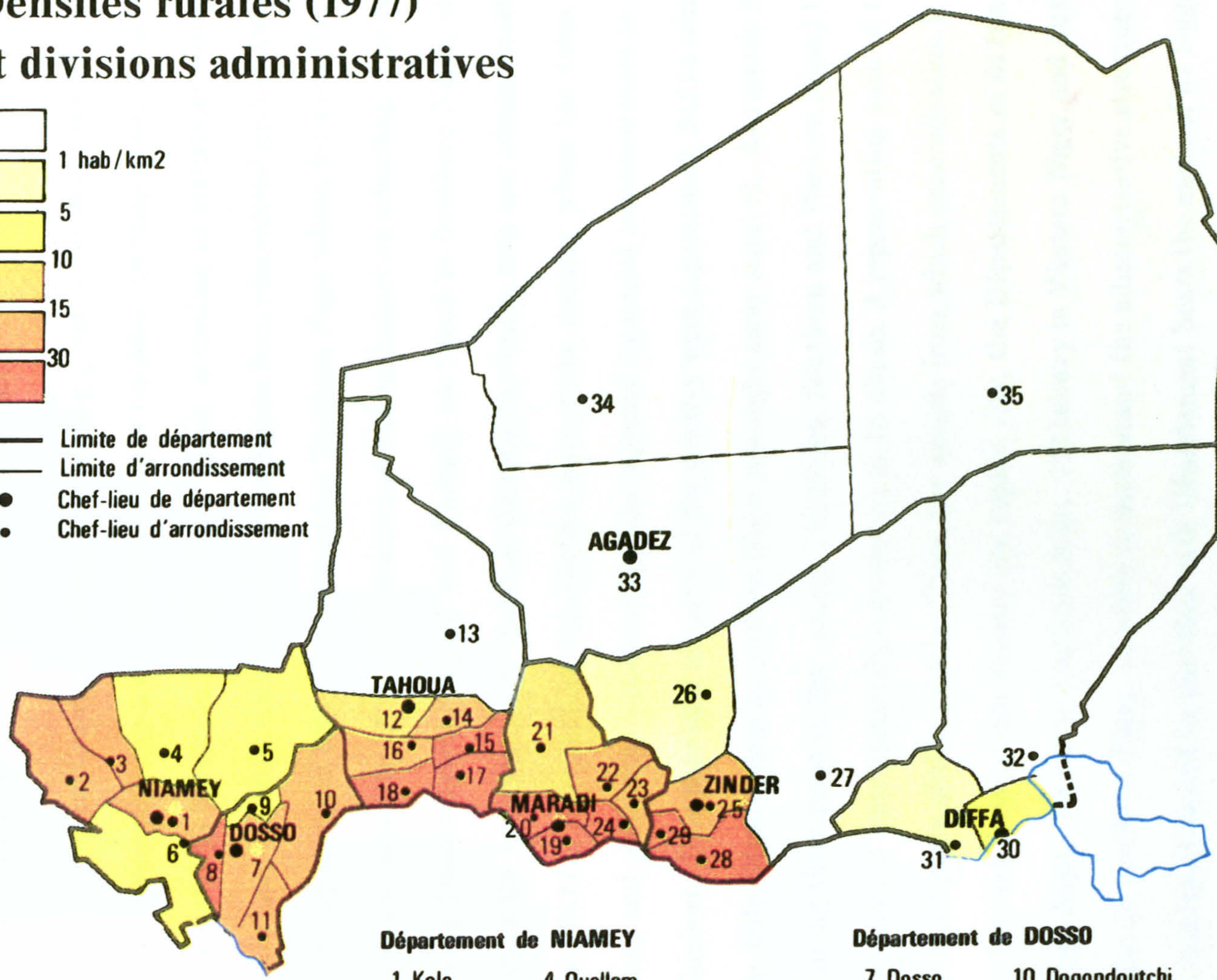
The last reason lies in the fact that the post to which the researcher was assigned was based in Niamey. It was therefore more convenient to include samples from a town where the informants were easily accessible. Furthermore, given the social unrest the country was undergoing and the frequent strikes initiated by students, one had no choice but start the inquiry as soon as possible; in fact the most common means officials use to stop student unrest is the closure of schools for a long period (e.g., secondary schools remained closed throughout 1989-90, and for over a month the folllowing year), and this would have seriously hindered the investigation.

In other words the selection of Niamey derives from purposive sampling which Cohen and Manion (1989:103) defined as follows:

Densités rurales (1977) et divisions administratives



Limite de département
Limite d'arrondissement
Chef-lieu de département
Chef-lieu d'arrondissement



Echelle : 1 : 14 000 000

0 140 280 km

Département de NIAMEY

1 Kolo
2 Téra
3 Tillabéri
4 Ouallam
5 Filingué
6 Say

Département de DOSSO

7 Dosso
8 Boboye
9 Loga
10 Dogondoutchi
11 Gaya

Département de TAHOUA

12 Tahoua
13 Tchin-Tabaradène
14 Keïta
15 Bouza
16 Illéla
17 Madaoua
18 Birni-Nkonni

Département de MARADI

19 Madarounfa
20 Guidan-Roumji
21 Dakoro
22 Mayahi
23 Tessaoua
24 Aguié

Département de ZINDER

25 Mirria
26 Tanout
27 Gouré
28 Magaria
29 Matamèye

Département de DIFFA

30 Diffa
31 Maïné-Soroa
32 Nguigmi

Département d'AGADEZ

33 Agadez
34 Arlit
35 Bilma

> In purposive sampling, the researcher handpicks the cases to be included in his sample on the basis of his judgement of their typicality. In this way, he builds up a sample that is satisfactory to his specific needs.

4.1.1.1 Selecting the Other Administrative Regions

Having chosen Niamey on purposive sampling grounds, we were then left with seven administrative regions or Départements to consider. Of these seven, 2 (**Dosso** and **Tillabery**) belong to Western Niger which, according to statistical records, seems to have benefited more than any other region from educational undertakings; 2 others (**Agadez** and **Tahoua**) are located in Northern Niger where, for a long time, the nomadic activities of the inhabitants has had an impact on schooling. The two following Départements (**Maradi** and **Zinder**) are found in Southern Niger, and known as the economic nerve centre of the country; finally, only one administrative region, **Diffa**, is located in the Eastern part of the country where the rates of truancy and premature school-leaving are reported by school administrators to be the highest. To ensure that all parts of the country were represented, **Diffa** which is the only Département in Eastern Niger was right away selected. As regards the remaining three parts of the country (Northern, Southern and Western Niger) the Départements were randomly selected so as to obtain 3 representing each of the mentioned parts of the country. Thus, the sample from which generalization is to be made was drawn from **Niamey** the capital city, the Départements of **Diffa** in Eastern Niger, **Tahoua** in Northern Niger, **Tillabery** in Western Niger and finally **Zinder** in Southern Niger. In order to understand the administrative structure of the country, it should be said that each Département bears the name of its biggest town which is also the 'Chef lieu de Département'. Hence, the town of Zinder is the Chef lieu de Département of the Département of **Zinder** which encompasses 5 Arrondissements.

4.1.1.2 Selecting the Urban and Rural Areas

In the present study each of the 'Chef lieu de Département' was selected on the premise that it is the urban area of the administrative entity and that the arrondissements are located in rural areas. It has already been revealed that the Département and the Chef lieu de Département bear the same name. Since each Chef lieu de Département is a town, the investigation was thus conducted in the following towns: *Diffa*, *Tahoua*, *Tillabery*, *Zinder* and of course *Niamey* the capital city. It should be said in passing that many educational authorities and even some teachers hold the view that pupils in rural areas like school less than those living in urban areas.

There were twenty one Arrondissements (all located in rural areas) which administratively depended upon the 4 selected Départements. Simple random sampling was used to determine the 4 arrondissements in which the survey was to be conducted. As put by Jaeger (1988:317) two principles define this sampling technique: (a) 'every element in the population has the same chance of being sampled', and (b) 'selection of any one element has no influence on the chance that any other element is selected.' In order to achieve this aim, random sampling was carried out four times. First, each of the 4 Arrondissements dependent on Diffa was written on a piece of paper and put in a box; then one of the pieces of paper was randomly selected from the box. The second step was to select randomly one Arrondissement out of the 7 existing in the Département of Tahoua. The last but one stage was to select, using the random sampling principle, another Arrondissement from the 5 existing in the Département Tillabery. Finally, the same technique was applied to choose one arrondissement from the 5 existing in Zinder département. Thus, *Kollo* in the Département of Tillabery, *Konni* in the

Département of Tahoua, *Mainé-Soroa* and *Myrriah* in those of Diffa and Zinder, respectively were randomly selected.

4.1.2 Selecting the Schools and the Pupils

Because of the various differences existing between schools, they were first stratified by schooling system status (C.E.G. / Lycée) and type (private / state) before they underwent simple random sampling selection. Since on average one day was spent in each school, there was not indeed sufficient time to select pupils on the basis of simple random or systematic sampling. As regards the former sampling technique, it requires selecting names from a hat or a box, or using a table of random numbers, which is a set of randomly assorted digits (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989:162-63). Random samples could also have been drawn from a computer system programme, which unfortunately is non-existent in our schools. The latter sampling approach is described by Cohen and Manion (1989:102) as a modified form of simple random sampling involving selected subjects from a population list in a systematic rather than random fashion; but, the starting point for the selection is randomly chosen.

Other selection methods such as dimensional, quota, purposive, snowball or convenience sampling techniques (Cohen & Manion, 1989:103-4) were also found irrelevant in the sampling of the pupils. Instead, cluster sampling that Charles (1988:153) described as follows suited the choice of the sample in question:

> When the population is spread out over a large geographical region, random selection may not be possible. Or, when conducting experimental studies, it may not be feasible to do the experiment with only a few selected students in different schools and classrooms - instead, whole classes or schools must be used. In those cases, investigators use cluster sampling, in which whole classes from different schools or regions of the country are selected for the sample. All the students in the classrooms and schools are randomly selected from the larger population.

Thus, all *quatrième* and *troisième* classes of the randomly selected C.E.Gs. were first recorded, before having the simple random sampling principle applied. With regard to the *Lycées* they were first stratified then randomly selected. The few *sixième* and *cinquième* classes involved in the enquiry were also randomly chosen.

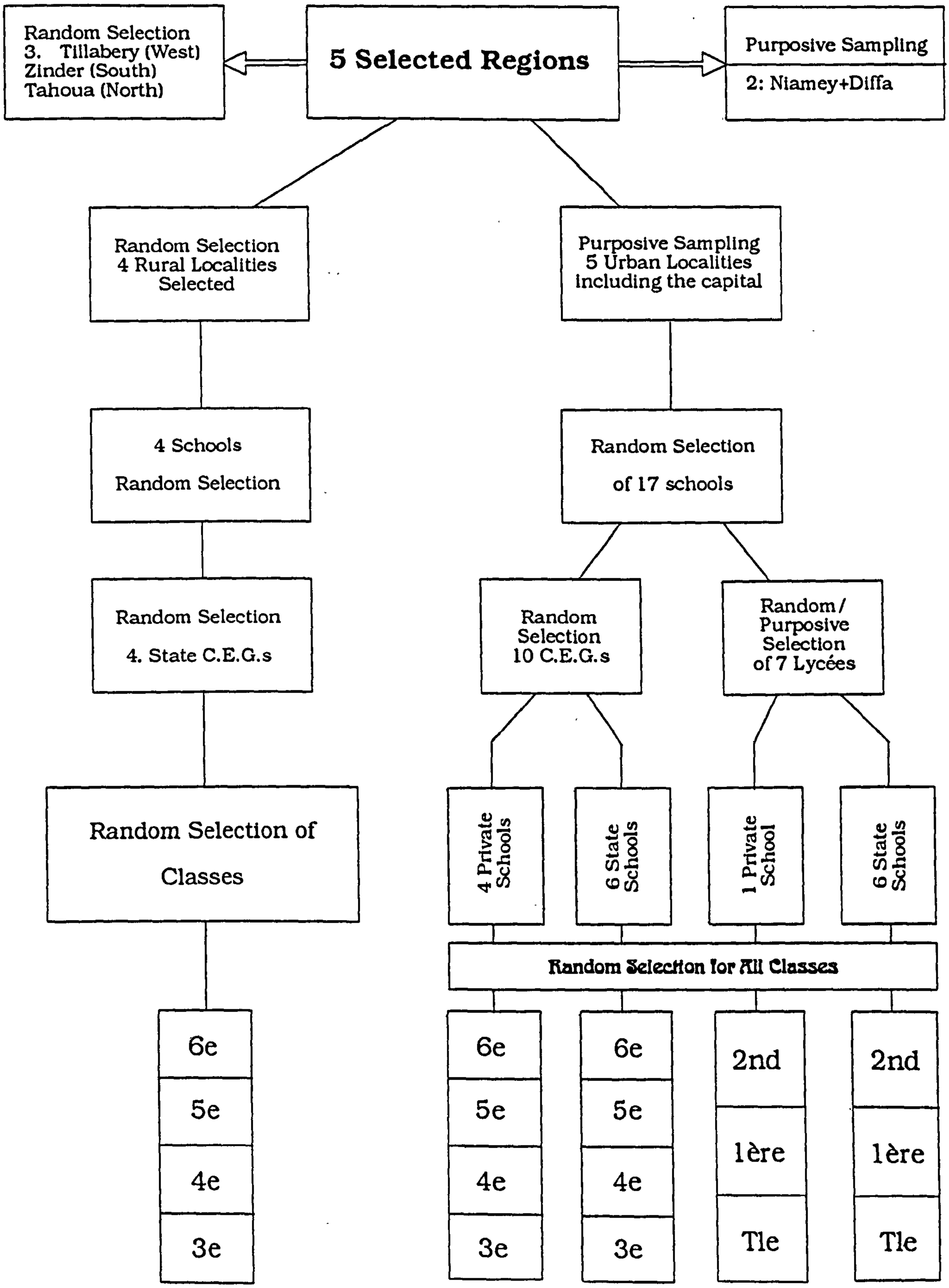
4.1.3 Summary

Describing the mechanics of sampling, Mouly (1978:145) states that 'no perfect or universally adequate sampling model has, as yet, been devised; that the method to be used in a given investigation depends on the nature of the problem, the subject to be located, as well as on such factors as cost and administrative convenience.' These restrictions along with the time element have to be accepted as external constraints.

Based on Kish (1965 cited in Wiersma, 1980:193) four criteria for a good sampling design namely, 'goal orientation, measurability, practicality and economy', the methodology used to obtain the sample suitable to the investigation is multifarious for it encapsulates the following types of sampling procedures:

1. simple random sampling was used to select locations, classes and schools;
2. stratified random sampling allowed the selection of regions and schools;
3. the capital city was selected on the principle of purposive sampling;
4. cluster sampling was used to select pupils;
5. finally, all these selection techniques lead to multi-stage sampling since samples were selected in stages, that is samples were taken from samples.

SAMPLING CHART



NB 4 rural CEG + 10 urban CEG (4 Pr, 6 state) ⇒ 14 CEG

4.2 Description of the Population and the Samples

At this stage, it is worth recalling that the curriculum aspect on which emphasis is laid in this study is English in Niger, that as a school subject it is solely taught from the beginning of Secondary Education (*vide supra*:chap.3). Therefore, in terms of sampling the preceding two statements entail that the parent population from which the sample was drawn, is that of the first and second cycle pupils of Secondary Education, i.e pupils of forms ranging from Sixième to Terminale found throughout the country.

The nature of the study, has led us to opt for a stratified random sample drawn from the whole population of Secondary Education. As we saw above, having considered schools as sampling units (Burroughs 1971:57), they were then stratified (Cohen & Manion 1989:102) before selection by (1) *Region* (the 8 administrative areas into which the country is divided); (2) *Area* (rural / urban areas); (3) *Schooling system status* (C.E.G / Lycée); (4) *Type* (private / state schools). Within each school selected, entire forms were randomly selected to participate in the project.

4.2.1 The Pupils

Taking into account the time alloted to research, logistical contraints and the vastness of the country, we found it justified to limit the study to pupils belonging to the capital city and 4 other randomly chosen Départements.

4.2.1.1 The Sixième Pupils

Children in Niger begin to learn English as *sixième* pupils between the ages of 12 and 14. Only a limited number of these pupils were sampled, the questionnaire

having been primarily designed for older pupils in their last 2 years of the C.E.G. or those of the *Lycée*. As a matter of fact, a *sixième* pupil would typically take one and a half hours to complete the questionnaire. 83 pupils were sampled from 2 forms of the American Peace Corps Summer Model School in Niamey. These students originated from various secondary schools in the capital and around the country, and had come to attend mathematics demonstration lessons organized for new Peace Corps volunteers. Interest was shown in the *sixième* pupils of this school because (a) they may be regarded as a representative sample of the *sixième* pupils of the parent population, and (b) their flexible time table allows an appropriate administration of the questionnaire from the point of view of timing and explanations. As to why *sixième* pupils in general were included in the survey, the reason lies in the fact that they are believed to be the most motivated learners of English language, and such an assumption needs to be verified.

4.2.1.2 The Cinquième Pupils

A year older than the *sixième* pupils, the *cinquième* pupils are in their second year of English. Again, for the same reasons advanced above, only a few students were asked to fill in the questionnaire: 143 pupils were sampled from 4 forms in 1 rural and 1 urban school

4.2.1.3 The Quatrième and Troisième Pupils

These students are in their penultimate and final years of the C.E.G. or the first cycle of Secondary Education, and constitute the bulk of the population under study. Thus, 407 pupils from 10 *quatrième* forms and 420 pupils from 11 *troisième* forms were sampled from urban and rural schools throughout the 5 regions involved in the enquiry. Table 4.1 sums up the C.E.G. pupils samples.

Table 4.1 — The C.E.G. Pupils Sample

Administ. Area	Locality	School	Status	Level	Pupils	Class
Diffa	Diffa	C.E.G	State	3 ème	33	1
Diffa	Diffa	C.E.G	State	4 ème	34	1
Diffa	Mainé	C.E.G	State	3 ème	23	1
Diffa	Mainé	C.E.G	State	4 ème	31	1
Capital	Niamey	C.E.G 4	State	5 ème	69	2
Capital	Niamey	C.E.G 4	State	4 ème	49	1
Capital	Niamey	C.E.G Baniz.	state	3 ème	45	1
Capital	Niamey	Ch.Anta Diop	Private	3 ème	42	1
Capital	Niamey	Summer School	Private	6 ème	83	2
Tahoua	Tahoua	C.E.G 2	State	3 ème	30	1
Tahoua	Tahoua	C.E.G 2	State	4 ème	54	1
Tahoua	Tahoua	C. Humanité	Private	3 ème	44	1
Tahoua	B. konni	C.E.G	State	3 ème	46	1
Tahoua	B. Konni	C.E.G	State	4 ème	58	1
Tillabery	Tillabery	C.E.G 1	state	3 ème	33	1
Tillabery	Tillabery	C.E.G 1	State	4 ème	39	1
Tillabery	Kollo	C.E.G	State	4 ème	68	2
Tillabery	Kollo	C.E.G	State	5 ème	74	2
Zinder	Zinder	C.E.G 1	State	3 ème	35	1
zinder	Zinder	C.E.G 1	State	4 ème	33	1
Zinder	Zinder	C.E.G Bosso	Private	3 ème	53	1
Zinder	Myrriah	C.E.G 1	State	3 ème	36	1
Zinder	Myrriah	C.E.G 1	State	4 ème	41	1
Total	9	14	S=10/P=4		1053	27

4.2.1.4 The Lycée Students

Pupils in the Lycée are not only older than in the C.E.G., but are also

streamed. This, to some extent, determines not only the main subjects they study, but also their career. Hence, not only did we have to take into consideration the different levels of the schools but also the streams or the "Séries A, C, and D" in selecting the samples. In effect, there are three main levels in this type of school: the *seconde* form which has only two streams: A (for literature and social sciences) and C (for Mathematics, Natural Sciences, and Physics) the *première* form which has three streams A (letters), C (Mathematics and Physics) and D (Biology), and finally the *terminale* divided into as many streams as the previous form.

As regards the Lycée samples they are thus tabulated:

Area I or (**Diffa Region**): There is only one *lycée* which takes students from the three state C.E.G.s of this area. In terms of participation, 1 *seconde* C class of 30 pupils, 1 *première* C class of 8 and 1 *première* D class of 24 took part in the investigation. It is worth noting that there is no private secondary school in the region. The reason that may be put forth to explain the small number of students (62) that we obtained in that area resides in the fact that (a) the school was under-populated (only three schools provided it with new students), (b) most of the students were taking term examinations, and (c) the school officials were not informed of the survey until shortly before our arrival.

Area II or (**Zinder Region**):

This region also has only one *lycée* (named Lycée Amadou Kouran Daga of Zinder) which takes students from the 6 state and private C.E.G.s in Zinder and from 8 other state C.E.G.s; the latter are located in small towns administratively dependent on Zinder. The region also has a teacher training school (the Ecole Normale Askia Mohamed) for male students where academic conditions are similar to the *lycées*. Another specificity of this school is that its students come from

throughout the country. Finally, mention should be made of the existence of 1 private school which has both C.E.G. and *lycée* status and in which only the first cycle pupils were able to take part in the inquiry.

The population involved in the investigation in this area may be summed up as follows: 52 students from 1 *seconde* A form, 45 students from 1 *seconde* C form, 57 from 2 *première* A forms, 9 from 1 *première* C form, 67 from 2 *première* D forms, 16 others from 1 *terminale* form and finally 26 from 1 *terminale* D form were sampled- a total of 272 *lycée* students from 9 different forms.

Area III or Tahoua Region

Again in this part of the country there is only one regional *lycée* taking students from 7 state C.E.G.s and 1 private C.E.G. However, it is worth pointing out that students were not sampled as they were sitting for examinations, and the school was reluctant to let them take part in the research. Therefore, all the informants of that area belong to the first cycle secondary schools (*vide supra*).

Area IV or Tillabery Region

Two state second cycle schools are located in this region: 1 *lycée* with pupils from 12 C.E.G.s , and 1 girls' teacher-training school which is attended by pupils from throughout the country. In the two schools 151 students from 5 different forms were involved in the study.

Area V or the capital city / Niamey

Niamey has 3 state *lycées*, 1 private *lycée* and 4 private schools with C.E.G. and *lycée* status. Out of these, the state Lycée Kassai and the private Lycée/C.E.G. Cheick Anta Diop provided the investigation with 208 students from 8 different forms.

4.2.2 The Teachers

In the preceding lines mention is made of the teachers as being part of the samples our study. In effect, the triangulated nature of the inquiry has led us to consider not only teachers of English, but also teachers of other subjects taught in secondary schools. Thus, 133 teachers from a certain number of schools involved in the inquiry accepted to fill in a questionnaire designed for the the teaching staff. Tables 4.2 and 4.3 give more details as to the subjects they teach and their localities.

It is worth pointing out that we initially intended to give out 10 teacher questionnaires per school visited. Unfortunately, this could not be achieved because of (a) technical reasons relating to the reprographic system in the Ministry of Education, and (b) the financial limitations. As a matter of fact, only a small proportion of both the pupils and teachers' questionnaires were reproduced *recto verso* in the Ministry before the machine broke down. This way of reproducing the questionnaires is obviously the most favoured inasmuch as it would have allowed us to be in possession of more questionnaires. As time and finance were determinant factors in the survey, we had no other alternatives but seize the first opportunity which was offered, i.e reproduce the questionnaires only in *recto simple*, which ironically turned out to be time consuming and of course more costly. Consequently, given the reduction in the number of questionnaires, and the fact that most of the interviews were to be carried out in Niamey, we found it justified to give out a very limited number of teachers questionnaires in schools located in the capital. Finally, it should be noted that Heads of school were responsible for randomly selecting the teachers who were to fill in the questionnaires.

In a nutshell, 143 teachers questionnaires were distributed in fifteen private

and state secondary schools. Out of these, 10 duly filled in by teachers of C.E.G. 1 and the Ecole Normale of Tillabery went astray through the official channel. It was quite impossible to ask these teachers to refill in questionnaires because they were engrossed in exams correction in various places of the country.

Table 4.2 — Teachers' Sample

Admin. Area	Locality	Establishment	Status	Teachers
Diffa	Diffa	C.E.G	State	9
Diffa	Diffa	Lyc. I. Alaouma	State	15
Diffa	Mainé	C.E.G	State	11
Niamey	Niamey	C.E.G Banizoumbou	State	8
Niamey	Niamey	Lycée Kassai	State	4
Tahoua	Tahoua	C.E.G.II	State	12
Tahoua	Tahoua	C.E.G Humanité	Private	4
Tahoua	Birni N Konni	C.E.G	State	7
Tillabery	Tillabery	C.E.G.I	State	7
Tillabery	Tillabery	Ecole Normale	State	5
Tillabery	kollo	C.E.G	State	7
Zinder	Zinder	Ecole Normale	State	7
Zinder	Zinder	Lycée A.K.Daga	State	15
Zinder	Zinder	Et. Privé Bosso	Private	9
Zinder	Zinder	C.E.G. Birni	State	12
Zinder	Mirryah	C.E.G.I	State	11

4.2.3 The Educational Officials

It should be pointed out that the way the Nigerien educational system is structured has led us to include in that population school principals - because they

Table 4.3 — Synoptic Table of Teachers and Subjects

No	Subjects	Teachers
1	Arabic	3
2	English	25
3	French	13
4	Engl. & Fr.	2
5	Fr/ His.& Geog.	12
6	His.& Geog.	18
7	Mathematics	19
8	Math & Nat.Sc.	3
9	Math & Phys.	7
10	Natural Sciences	9
11	Nat Sc. & Phys.	6
12	Philosophy	7
13	Physics	7
14	Psychology	1
15	Physical Training	1

are directly responsible for the schools they supervise -, teaching Advisers and Inspectors - because their major task is to make sure that the different syllabi are implemented as required, that every teacher discharges his/her duty as expected. Similarly, we have also decided to refer to Heads of Department of the Ministry of National Education because administrative, financial and important pedagogical decisions are within their juridiction. Finally, the last category of people who are part of the population to consider in our study are representatives of the Pupils' Parents Association.

4.3 Research Instruments and their Administration

4.3.1 Questionnaires

4.3.1.1 Nature of the questionnaires

At the outset, four main reasons may be suggested to account for the use of such a research tool to obtain information from pupils and teachers: (1) they are too numerous to be interviewed so as to obtain representative and reliable data, (2) their collaboration in such an activity is easily obtainable, (3) they would prefer to deal with questionnaires than interviews, (4) since pupils have to answer the questionnaires in the classroom and eventually with the help of their teachers other than those of English, it was hoped that there would be less wastage in terms of unreturned or incompletely/inaccurately filled in questionnaires.

Another point which ought to be raised is that of the nature of the questionnaires themselves. In effect, it is generally agreed that questionnaires should be clear, without any ambiguity to those who are to answer the various items. Henceforth, considering this fact, and also considering the fact that first and second cycle students have not yet grasped the subtleties of the English language, we have found it reasonable to construct the pupils questionnaire in French, the medium of instruction.

However, it should also be said at once that the teachers' questionnaire was designed in French for it was meant for teachers of the first and second cycles, irrespective of the subjects they taught.

The pupils' questionnaires comprises three main sections partly based on Gardener and Lambert' s (1972:104-163) study of students' attitudes and motivation

as regards second-language learning (cf Appendix A). These three parts may be summed up as follows:

(1) Section one which is the introductory part deals with such independent binary variables as male/female, village/town, private / state (schools), used to identify the informants.

(2) Section two is divided into three main parts dealing with pupils' attitudes and motivation for school and their perceptions of the syllabi, the teaching materials and the teaching staff.

- Thus in the first part which is made up of thirty three items, pupils' attitudes towards school are measured through a summated rated technique developed by Likert (Murphy & Likert 1937) cited in Phillips (1971:222). They were requested to indicate whether they strongly agreed (rated 5), agreed (rated 4), or were undecided (rated 3), or disagreed (rated 2) or strongly disagreed (rated 1) with the proposed items.

- Pupils were then asked in the second part of this section to classify four items (and a possible fifth one) relating to their school motivation in order of importance.

- As for the third part, it deals with pupils' attitudes and perceptions of the school subjects as well as their teaching materials and teaching staff. The rating is made from a scale either varying from 1 to 7 (for school subject) or 1 to 9 (for teaching materials and teaching staff). This measurement approach was chosen because of its use by teachers to assess learners' assignments. Furthermore, students have a cognitive representation of this scale. In the case of the present questionnaire, 9 stands for **Excellent** 8 for **Very good** 7 for Good 6 for **Fairly-**

good, 5 for Average, 4 for Mediocre 3 for Poor, 2 for Very poor and finally 1 for No opinion. Henceforth, there would be no ambiguity between the different points and their values. In addition to this rating, pupils had to indicate by order of preference the three subjects they liked most and three others they disliked most. They were finally requested to express their choice of a job they liked; if it happened that the pupil selected teaching, s/he was requested to say the education system level (Primary, Secondary, or Higher education) they would be interested in, and the subject they would teach.

(3) Consisting of five parts, section three dealt with English as a component of the curriculum. Again, pupils were invited to express their perceptions, attitudes and motivations towards English (Language Teaching). They were also given the opportunity to 'assess' their English lessons and teachers. Once more, the measurement instrument were the Likert scales and the Semantic Differential scales.

4.3.1.2 Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaires

While designing the questionnaires the following guidelines for writing effective questions and statements (Babbie:1983) cited in McMillan & Schumacher (1989:256-58) were carefully observed. For instance, double barrelled questions, or long and complicated items were avoided. So were biased or negative items. Another concern of the questionnaire designer was to make sure that all questions were relevant, related to one another, and were important to the respondents; that all respondents interpreted the questions the same way. In short, clarity should exist throughout the questionnaires.

The next step after these considerations was to find out the evidence for the

validity of the questionnaires, or to use Borg's definition (1987:92)

> the degree to which a test or other measurement tool measures what it claims to measure.

Amongst the four types of validity- content validity, construct validity, concurrent validity, and predictive validity- discussed by Gay (1976:106-7), only the first one was used to test the validity of the questionnaires. The reasons why this kind of validity test was chosen are twofold:

1) as explained by Gay (1976:106) 'content validity is the degree to which a test measures an intended content area'; and the content area the questionnaires purport to measure is that of the curriculum in general and English Language Teaching in Niger in particular. So, there does exist a content area to be measured.

2) content validity can be determined by expert judgement taking into account the face validity and the sample validity of the questionnaires; the first type of validity is defined as 'being concerned with whether the test measures the intended content' and the second as 'being concerned with how well the test samples the total content area.'

Thus, the pupil and teacher' questionnaires were submitted to ten specialists in the field of teaching (cf table 4.4). After the objectives of the research were explained, they were invited to determine the face validity and sample validity of the instruments. All concluded that the content validity of the questionnaire was satisfactory.

It should also be noted that none of the methods of estimating reliability which are based on scoring, that is Split-Half Reliability, Alternate-Form Reliability, Test-Retest Reliability, the Method of Rational Equivalence (Borg 1987:123-24) was

Table 4.4 — Questionnaires Validity Examiners

Names of Examiners	Academic Situation	Actual Position
Pr Abdou Hamani	Former Univ. Rector	Unesco Exec. Secretary
Pr André Salifou	Professor & Expert in Ed.	H.C.R Pres.
Mr Amadou Alassan	Sec. Ed. Director	Min. of Educ.
Mr Amadou Hamidou	Sec. Ed. Inspector	Min. of Educ.
Mr Ayouba Brah	Teacher of French	Lycée Issa Korombé
Mr A.E. Fisher	Brit. Counc. Adviser	I.N.D.R.A.P
Mr Gaston Kaba	Univ. lecturer	U.S.A.I.D
Dr H K Lailaba	Univ. Lecturer	I.N.D.R.A.P
Mr S. Galadima	Educationist	World Bank Ed. Projects
Mrs Tinga Dizé	Educationist	I.N.D.R.A.P

used.

Since reliability is defined as 'the degree to which test scores are free from measurement errors', or as 'being concerned with the level of internal consistency of the measure, or its stability over time' (Borg 1987:121), the panel of specialists and some teachers were also invited to give their opinion about the internal consistency of the questionnaires. All concerned agreed on the consistency of the questionnaires, including the students who showed a genuine interest by claiming spare copies to keep with them.

Finally, since the questionnaires were to be filled in by students and teachers, such important issues as the Hawthorne and Halo (*vide infra*) effects were taken into account during the questionnaire administration.

4.3.2 Interviews

4.3.2.1 Some General Considerations

Widely used in survey research aimed at describing social conditions, the interview is nowadays viewed as a major component of qualitative reasearch- which is part of the methodology favoured in the present study. As stated by Powney & Watts, (1987:vii)

> Interviews, necessarily of course, involve people talking and listening to people. People are delightfully varied in their abilities and willingness to talk, or listen, to provide accurate information, abide by what they have previously said or thought, said they thought or thought they said.

Another definition of the interview is that given by Cannel & Kahn (cited in Powney & Watts, *ibid*:6) who view this research instrument as 'a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focussed by him on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation.'

Indeed, both definitions and many others (McMillan & Schumacher 1989), (Wolcott in Jaeger, 1988), (Merriam, 1988), (Patton, 1987), (Borg, 1987), lay emphasis on the direct verbal interaction between individuals. However, this direct interaction between, let us say, the interviewer and the interviewee(s) is the source of both advantages and setbacks. Amongst the advantages of the interview, Borg (1987:110) points out its adaptability, that is the possibility for the interviewer 'to follow up leads that show up during the interview, and thus obtain more data and greater clarity.' Thus, the interviewer can adapt the situation to each respondent. Finally, as put by Gay (1976:134), 'the interview may also result in more accurate and honest responses since the interviewer can explain and clarify both the purpose of the research and individual questions.' In spite of the advantages the interview

has over other data collection instruments, it has some limitations as a research tool. In effect, the very fact that it is based on direct verbal interaction may create subjectivity and bias which Brown (1988:32-3) refers to as the Hawthorne and Halo effects. He explains that the first type of effect would be found 'in people who are so pleased at being included in the study that the results of the investigation are more closely related to this pleasure than anything that actually occurs in the research.' As for the the second type of effect, he says that 'it is due to the tendency among human beings to respond positively to a person they like.' It should be added that there are other variables deriving from the halo effect, which Brown (1988:33) has termed the subject expectancy and the researcher expectancy. Briefly, the former attitude may be defined as the subjects' desire to help the researcher achieve his/her goals; the latter occurs when the researcher has expectations which may alter the results of the study (probably in his/her advantage).

It should be said at once, that a certain number of measures have been taken to prevent the infiltration of such variables as the Hawthorne and the Halo effects in the various interviews held in the frame of this study (*vide infra*). Finally, the choice of the interview is justified in the fact that (1) the overall methodology is based on triangulation which according to Cohen and Manion (1989:277) increases the validity of the data; and (2) as noted by Mouly (1978:202) 'interviews permit the canvassing of persons who are essentially illiterate for questionnaires purpose, or who are reluctant to put things in writing.' This is indeed true of most pupils' parents for they can neither read nor write, and of the Ministry officials who hardly have the time to fill in questionnaires.

4.3.2.2 Nature of the Interviews

Before going any further, mention should be made of the three types of interview and distinction between them drawn. It is commonly agreed that the interview may be defined on a continuum where structured interview would be at one end and the unstructured at the other. And in between would be found the semi-structured interview.

Structured interviews are used when a large sample is to be surveyed, or when hypotheses are to be tested, or when quantification of results is important. According to Denzin (1970:123-124) cited in Merriam (1988:73) four assumptions underlie structured interviews:

> (1) The respondents have a common vocabulary. (2) Questions can be devised that are equally meaningful to every respondent. (3) Not only do the questions have a common meaning, but so does the context in which they are asked, including the interview context itself. (4) The preceding three assumptions can be met through a pilot investigation.

In a semi-structured interview, an interview guide containing a list of issues to be discussed is used, and neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined beforehand. This form of interview is a much more flexible version of the structured interview. As put by Merriam (1988:74) 'this format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic'. In this type of interview the interviewer needs to have a certain knowledge of the issues under discussion. In addition, according to Hitchcock and Hughes (1989:83) it tends to be favoured by educational researchers because of the probing and expanding opportunity it offers the interviewer.

If in the preceding types there is some structure to observe as to the progress of the interview, in unstructured interviews there is no 'predetermined set of ques-

tions and the interview is essentially exploratory' (Merriam, 1988:74).' This is the case in unstructured interviews because, as noted by the same author (*ibid.*), 'the researcher does not know enough about a phenomenon to ask relevant questions'.

Powney and Watts note that there are basically two methods of recording interviews: either by field note or by audio-tape recording. However, they do agree that video taping interviews – a state of the art method in interviewing – is growing in popularity.

Besides these approaches, Jaeger (1988:312-14) refers to a fourth one known as the telephone interview, which he thus explains:

> Telephone interview surveys are usually far less expensive than face-to-face interview surveys. The opportunity to secure additional information when a respondent's answer is either unclear or off the mark, is present in both types of survey [...]. As is true in face-to-face interview surveys, telephone interviews allow questions to be asked one at a time, in the order prescribed by the survey researcher.

Of the four aforementioned methods, interviewing by means of audio-tape recording suited the investigation most inasmuch as the equipment is accessible and easily manipulated. Furthermore, since the investigation required moving around, it was wiser to opt for a portable recording device.

As for the field note method, it was not used in the course of the investigation for it was found time consuming, tedious and not easy to carry out efficiently. Contrary to Jaeger's view, interviews by means of telephone would be very costly in the case of the present study. The truth of the matter is that, in a country where the minimum use of telephone is part of the economy readjustment, it is out of question to carry out interviews by telephone. Another reason for discarding the telephone interview is given by Sykes and Hoinville (quoted in Powney & Watts 1987:31):

> Communication between respondent and interviewer is limited to verbal and

> paralinguistic utterances with neither person able to see the facial expressions, gestures and non-verbal messages conveyed by the other.

Finally, video taping interviews was ruled out, merely because the equipment put at the disposal of I.N.D.R.A.P. (and that we could have used) was not operational during the fieldwork.

4.3.2.3 Interview Guide/Schedule Design

For the sake of clarity and efficiency in the use of this research tool, an interview guide – which covered the area of content that the questionnaires purport to investigate – was first designed (cf Appendix C). Then, an interview schedule involving semi-structured questions (McMillan & Schumacher 1989:266-7) was constructed. This interview schedule encompasses all the questions to ask the interviewees (cf Appendix C). With regard to the interview guide, it deals with four main areas, viz (1) *the pupils' attitudes and motivations* towards school, taught subjects, Foreign Languages and English in particular; (2) *the officials' perceptions* of the curriculum which also deals with their perception of teacher-education, their attitude(s) towards English teaching; (3) *Innovations* in the curriculum; and (4) *suggested solutions* to enhance the educational system. One of the concerns in constructing the interview guide and the interview schedule, was the avoidance of leading questions which would alter the results of interview studies. As explained by Borg (1987:112) 'a leading question is any question whose phrasing leads the respondent to consider one reply more desirable than another.' This concern was kept in mind throughout the construction of the thirty three semi-structured questions that constitute the interview schedule. In sum, the procedure we opted for enables the interviewer to follow 'a guide that lists questions covering all essential information needed by the researcher. However, he has also the option to follow up

any answers in an effort to get more information or clarify the respondent's replies' (Borg 1987:112). To complete the interview guide and the interview schedule, a *fiche signalétique* (cf Appendix C) encapsulating questions inquiring about the occupation, experience, age range, training of the respondent was also designed.

Finally, it should be said that structured and unstructured questions were discarded for, as noted by Gay (1976:134), the former 'require the interviewee to select from alternatives [and] are of course easier to analyze but tend to defeat the purpose of the interview'; as for the latter, he argues that 'although they allow absolute freedom of response, they can yield in-depth responses and provide otherwise unobtainable insights but produce data which are difficult to quantify and tabulate.'

4.3.2.4 The Participants

The interviews were intended for educational officials and representatives of the Pupils Parents Association for reasons mentioned in section 4.3.2.1. It should be said at once, that in the initial plan, three people from each of the visited localities were to be interviewed. Unfortunately, time and administration restrictions – no other interviewer helped in the interior of the country – hindered the full implementation of the plan. Thus the number of people involved in this research activity may be tabulated as follows:

1. Three decision-makers from the Ministry of National Education, namely the Secretary General, the Director for Secondary Education and the Director of the World Bank Projects for Education;
2. One Chief Inspector for Secondary Education;
3. One Lycée Principal based in Niamey;

4. One Nigérien ELT Advisers based at I.N.D.R.A.P in Niamey;

5. One British Council ELT Adviser based at I.N.D.R.A.P in Niamey;

6. One Training Officer from one of the international organizations based in Niamey; /

7. One lecturer from the University of Niamey;

8. One Head of Department in I.N.D.R.A.P;

9. Two Pupils' Parents;

10. Two Advisers (for French and of Primary Education).

All these respondents, were selected inasmuch as they suited most the inquiry. For instance, the Secretary General was selected because he is the second authority after the Minister, and therefore better placed than anyone else in the Ministry to discuss current educational matters; as for the others, they were in one way or another involved in the innovations undertaken by the Ministry. The two pupils' parents interviewed were picked because one is member of the Pupils Parents Association, and the second a parent who had reared more than ten children who all attended school.

Having briefly introduced the interviewees, a word should now be said about the interviewers. Two people conducted the interviews: the fieldworker and a female technician of I.N.D.R.A.P whose main job was to interview people (on educational matters) for a radio programme entitled *La Voix de l'Enseignement.* There are basically three reasons for which we had recourse to a second interviewer: (1) the survey could be completed within the time scheduled; (2) the administrative position of the fieldworker and his relationships with some people involved in edu-

cation could, to some extent, play a role in the interview of younger respondents; (3) thus, a second interviewer would enable us to minimize the presence of such variables as the Hawthorne and Halo effects in the interviews (Brown 1988:32-3) (Cohen & Manion 1989:202) (Wiersma 1980:123). Although the second interviewer knew about the mechanics of interviewing, she knew only a little about the research and nothing as regards the hypotheses because 'such information permits bias that could not occur if the interviewer had no access to the information' (Borg 1987:113).

4.3.2.5 Validity of the Interviews

As stated by Cohen and Manion (1989: 318) 'the most practical way of achieving greater validity is to minimise the amount of bias as much as possible.' Since bias may derive from three sources (1) the characteristics of the interviewer, (2) those of the respondent, and (3) the content of the questions, we find it reasonable to discuss the validity of the interview from these three perspectives. It has already been said that the participation of a professional interviewer and her ignorance regarding the hypotheses were intended to minimize bias. Another step consisted in showing the interview schedule to the same panel which dealt with the questionnaire. They had to compare the interview schedule with the valid questionnaires (administered in the present survey) as suggested by Cohen and Manion (*ibid.*). A similar approach to determine the validity of the interview is stated by Mouly (1987:207) in the following terms:

> Establishing the validity of the interview presents much the same problems as in the case of the questionnaires. Again, validity pertains to the separate items as well as the overall operation.

In addition to the above steps to minimize bias, it should be noted that the use of leads was avoided in the interview schedule and in the interviewing.

4.3.3 Classroom Observation

Observation is nowadays commonly used as a means of gathering data about classroom processes. It is gaining popularity because 'an appreciation and understanding of classroom events is essential to any analysis of educational process' (Stubbs & Delamont 1976:5). Thus observation has been used to study various aspects of school life / activities as noted by Ullmann and Geva (1984:113)

> In educational settings observation has been used to gather information on a variety of topics such as student task orientation and achievement (Gaver and Richards, 1978-79), aspects of teacher effectiveness and characteristics of 'good' teachers (Belgard, Rosenshine and Gage, 1966; Moskowitz, 1976), the relationship between various interaction patterns in the classroom and student achievement (McEven, 1976), and the relationship between such factors as pacing, time spent on learning and student achievement (Bloom, 1974; Sirotnik, 1982; Wiley, 1973).

Other projects such as the ORACLE (Observational Research and Classsroom Learning Evaluation (Galton *et al.*, 1980, p1 cited in Burgess 1985:164), or the Third Edinburgh project, an intensive study by Delamont (1973) used observation to study social and educational 'phenomena' taking place in schools. Thus, the first investigation was studying the 'effectiveness of different approaches across the main subject areas of primary school teaching.' As for the second study it was interested in teacher-pupil interaction in a private fee-paying girls' school. Finally, Byram, Esarte-Sarries and Tylor (1991:296-7) note that there has recently been 'much foreign language classroom research undertaken, with the eventual aim of describing the most effective ways of teaching foreign languages (Allwright (1988), Mitchell (1985)).

As regards the present study, observation was used to gather information relating to the interaction patterns (Stubbs & Delamont 1976:6-11) occurring in English classes. Close attention was paid to such variables as teacher-talk, pupil-talk (teacher-student talking ratio, student-student interaction), variety in classwork,

classroom management, and follow up activities. The field notes taken during the classroom observations and English Pegagogical Units meetings minutes (*vide infra*) were meant to illuminate and validate data collected through other research instruments. In brief, our study may be described as a 'global research study' (Allwright (1988) cited in Byram, Esarte-Sarries and Tylor (1991:296) for 'it attempts to describe through systematic observation, interactions in the foreign language class' (Byram, Esarte-sarries and Tylor, (*ibid.*:296).

4.3.3.1 The Nature of the Classroom Observation

In each school, teachers of English like teachers of some other subjects are organized in *Unités Pédagogiques* led, in most cases, by the most experienced teacher. It is incumbent to each *Unité Pédagogique* to meet once or twice a month to work out long and short range plans, to design common term exams, and above all to organize *journées pédagogiques* or on-the-job-training sessions. During these sessions, two or three teachers volunteer to present lessons to which the English staff of the school (and sometimes some teachers from other schools), are invited to observe. At times, the English Language Adviser is also invited. The observers usually sit at the back of the classroom from where they take note of "what is happening in the classroom."

The classroom observations we undertook were in connection with some *journées pédagogiques* we attended as nonparticipant observer. In other words, we opted for an observational situation which Woods (1986:36) explains in the following terms:

> the researcher has only the role of researcher, and observes situations of interest in that capacity; for example a lesson from the back of a classroom, a school assembly from the back of a hall, a staff meeting or a playground from behind the sidelines. The researcher is, ideally, no part of these proceedings, and adopts 'fly on the wall' techniques to observe things as they happen, naturally, as undisturbed by his/her presence as possible.

In effect, we did take notes, were present during the critic sessions, but just to listen to the various contributions of the teachers that we later compared to ours. Participant observation that Delamont (1976:15) describes as being the form of observation where 'the observer talks to, and participates in activities with, the people she is studying', was not used simply because of its impracticality. As pointed out by Woods (*ibid.*:36-40), participant observation may (a) 'take up valuable time', (b) it may 'add to one's responsibilities', and (3) it may 'increase the possibilities of role conflict.' Furthermore it is worth noting that paricipant observation would have undermined teachers' confidence. Indeed, the fact that we intervened neither in the English lessons nor in the discussions after the demonstration lessons, gave more confidence to the teachers to actively participate during the critic sessions.

4.3.3.2 The Observation Instrument

As stated by Long (1980) cited in Allen and Swain (1984:114) 'instruments which have been developed for observation in content classrooms are not appropriate for second language classrooms' and all the more so in Foreign language classrooms. He also argues that 'a single observation instrument, be it a checklist or a set of scales, cannot capture detailed information on an endless number of variables' *(ibid.)*. That is why we have devised an observation instrument which is a combination of the Flanders' (1970) Interaction Analysis Categories (FIAC), the section B of Coker Wiersma (1980:235) Classroom Observations Keyed for Effectiveness Research Instrument (mainly the part relating to teaching strategies), the Stanford Teacher Competence Appraisal Guide, and the Target Language Observation Scheme (TALOS) (Ullmann & Geva, 1982). The observation sheets devised by I.N.D.R.A.P. were also taken into account. The so devised instrument is used

along with the field notes to measure the variables under study. The use of a schedule devised in advance implies that we have opted for systematic observation that Medley and Mitzel (1963) (cited in Burgess (1984:19)) describe as follows:

> The observer uses a schedule of some description, which has been devised in advance, and allows the observer to code behaviour as he observes it, usually so that it can later be quantified.

Two main sections are found in our observation instrument (cf Appendix D).

(1) the teacher-student interaction section which is made of ten variables - measured by means of five-point scales - among which the following may be quoted: teacher-talk time, use of French, use of English, positive reinforcement, student talk-time, use of French, use of English, classroom participation, and so forth.

(2) the section relating to miscellaneous pedagogical issues which consists of ten variables measured in the same way as those of the first section. In this section are included such variables as the four learning skills, the activities performed during the lesson (i.e lively lesson vs monotonous lesson), appropriateness of the lesson (i.e was the lesson appropriate for the level of the pupils), appropriateness of the language used (teacher's language competence), and so forth.

Altogether ten lessons were observed in two schools: the Lycée Kassai and the C.E.G. 4. Because of the student unrest in secondary schools and more particularly in private schools where teachers took part in strikes, it was quite impossible to observe lessons in most schools in Niamey. In the interior of the country, no classroom observation was undertaken because of time constraints imposed upon us by the Ministry. Our wish was to observe at least two teachers in each school visited. Besides the classroom observations carried out in Niamey, we asked three Inspectorates for Secondary Education namely, those of Niamey 1, Tahoua 1 and Zinder to send us 15 classroom observation reports allotted as follows: 5 in Math-

ematics, 5 in French, and 5 in English. These reports were intended to serve as a basis for comparing information they contained to the data that we collected in the course of our various classroom observations.

4.3.4 Archival Records and their Collection

4.3.4.1 Some General Considerations

McMillan and Schumacher (1988:398) consider archival and demographic records along with physical trace collection, to be the two forms of artifacts used by present-day educational groups. They define archival record collections as

> written and symbolic records kept by or on the participants in a social group. These usually take the form of official educational documents -, memos, minutes of meetings, student papers, enrollment records, lesson plans, student personal records,or government documents.

Foster and Sheppard (1980:200) in Burgess (1985:212) give the following more complete definition which involves photographs and sound recordings:

> The strict definition of an archive is a document which is produced by an individual or institution in the normal course of life or work and which provides a record or part of the history of that individual or institution. Archives are mainly written documents- that is, manuscripts or typescripts- but photographs and sound recordings can also be classified as archives as can some printed material.

The archival data collected mostly originated from official literature and may be divided into:

(a) original official texts comprising: ministerial reports, executive decrees and ordinances, ministerial correspondences to schools and institutes;

(b) secondary collection consisting of: minutes, seminar documents, in-service training documents, recorded lectures on Nigérien education.

Having thus decided which archival records were needed, the next stage was

to determine how to secure access to the chosen archives, often a difficult step for the social scientist. Thanks to our position in the Ministry however, access to archival data useful to the study was greatly facilitated.

4.3.4.2 Origin of the Archive Records

The bulk of the materials emanated from the Ministry of National Education and Higher Education, I.N.D.R.A.P. – the National Institute for Educational Reasearch –, the two Secondary Education Inspectorates located in Niamey and the National Institute for Archives. In the first institution such official documents as government documents, enrolment records, educational planning documents were collected. In the second institution and the Inspectorates technical educational documents were obtained: minutes of meetings, lessons plans, and teaching materials designed by the I.N.D.R.A.P. English department. Besides these written archival records, the Audio Visual department of the aforementioned institute provided us with sound recordings about the Nigerien education system. Amongst these, Pr André Salifou's conference which was held in 1985 was of most interest to our study. As for the National Institute for Archives, it held official documents relating to the development of education in Niger.

4.4 Pilot Study

The pilot study whose prime aim was to determine the feasibility of the proposed research procedures was carried out entirely in Niamey, the capital city. However, we should hasten to add that, as suggested by Long *et al.* (1985:97-8), the 'sample we used for the pilot study was representative of the sample intended for the main study.' The pilot study, started in the second half of January 1991

and was completed in April of the same year. It took more than three months to carry out the piloting because secondary schools and the University remained closed for about a month as a result of the various strikes.

4.4.1 Piloting the Questionnaires

4.4.1.1 Piloting the Pupil Questionnaire

The pilot study for the pupil questionnaires, was undertaken in the schools which were randomly selected for the main study. At the outset, it should be pointed out that we made sure that 'no individuals used in the pilot study were [going to be] included in the main study' (Long *et al.*, 1985:97-8). Conducting the piloting in schools where the main study was to be carried out had two advantages: (1) it enabled the fieldworker to be acquainted with the place, which helped solve problems that arose from environmental issues (*vide infra*) and (2) since the only 'research assistants' were members of the staff, (i.e *Surveillants Généraux*, Headmasters, teachers, E.L.T. Advisers), conducting the pilot study and the main study in the same schools enabled them to familiarise themselves with the administration of the questionnaires, which also saved time. The pilot study took place in the following schools: the Lycée Kassai and the C.E.G. 4. Both belong to the state and are second and first cycle schools, respectively. It should be reported that during the pilot study period, it was quite impossible for us to travel to any of the rural areas to test the research instruments. This was due to two reasons: (a) the tension prevailing in schools, and (b) because at that time, the Ministry's main concern was to find the ways and means to assuage the student unrest.

A word should be said about the size of the samples used in the piloting. Only three different classes (1 *seconde*, 1 *quatrième* and 1 *sixième*) were involved

in the pilot study for, as pointed out by Long *et al.* *(ibid)*, 'probably thirty or more individuals would be desirable to fieldtest an instrument, while estimating the reliability of raters may require only five or six raters.' Altogether 112 pupils took part in the pilot study. In terms of timing, it took the *seconde* pupils about 30 minutes to complete the questionnaire, the *quatrième* pupils about an hour, and the *sixième* learners between one and a half hours to two hours. Besides the pupils who filled in questionnaires at school, 25 others living in the fieldworker's neighbourhood were also administered the questionnaires. They had to take the questionnaires home and return them as soon as they completed them. However, out of the 25 pupils to which the questionnaires were given, only 17 returned their questionnaires completed. The remaining 8 did not, and thus during the main study pupils were required to fill in the questionnaires in their classrooms.

The pilot study revealed that out of 129 pupils who returned their questionnaires, 24 did not fill or only partially filled in the last part of section 3, i.e that in which semantic differential scales were used to measure the learners' perceptions of their English teachers and English lessons. Two reasons were later given by the pupils themselves:

(1) some found it difficult to give each of the seven intervals a 'value', which is probably due to the fact that it was the first time they were dealing with semantic differential scales.

(2) the others overtly said they could not be so critical of their English teachers. When told they did quite the same thing in the third part of section 2, they merely replied that in that part they were requested to say whether they found the teacher *Excellent*, *Très bien* and so forth, i.e to give a general appreciation about teachers. This kind of attitude may have resulted from the fact that

in some Nigérien *milieu*, younger people should not look elders in the eyes let alone be critical of them. Clearly, this type of effect, that might be called the "rearing effect" deserves further investigation.

To resolve these pitfalls there was a need (a) to use a rating system which was familiar to the pupils, and (b) to reassure the pupils by emphasizing the strictly anonymous nature of the questionnaires (*vide infra*). In order to make the last part of section three accessible to all, each of the 7 intervals was given a 'value'. Thus, the first interval to the left meant *Extrêment*, the next one *Très*, the third *Assez*, the one in the middle stood for *Moyennement*, the one next to it meant *Peu*, the sixth interval to the left stood for *Très peu*, and the last one for *Pas du tout*.

Needless to say the pupil questionnaire was piloted a second time, on a small scale, to check whether pupils would stumble again on the third section or not. The outcome of this second piloting was very satisfactory.

4.4.1.2 Piloting the Teacher Questionnaire

The piloting of the teacher questionnaires took place in two state secondary schools: the C.E.G Goudel and the Lycée Issa Korombé. The Head of the former school and a teacher of French of the latter school were responsible for giving out the total of 30 questionnaires to teachers irrespective of the subjects they taught. All but two questionnaires were completed and returned to the two piloting organizers within a week. Unfortunately, these two questionnaires were supposed to be filled in by teachers of Arabic, who happened not to speak French. Apart from this case, the piloting was very satisfactory, since the teachers involved in the inquiry reported the instrument to be straightforward.

4.4.2 Piloting the Interview

Two separate sessions were held with the view to offering each interviewer the opportunity to observe his/her counterpart so as to avoid disparities in interviewing approaches. The piloting showed that there were no great variations in the interviewers' techniques and that the second interviewer could efficiently carry out the inquiry.

4.5 Administering the Research Instruments

4.5.1 Some General Considerations

Throughout the research instruments administration focus was not only laid on the progress of the investigation but also on the extraneous variables (Brown 1988:29-49) which may bring about flaws in the validity of the study. These extraneous variables are classified by Brown (*ibid.*:29) in three categories to which he refers as (1) *environmental issues*, (2) *grouping issues* and (3) *people issues*.

With regards to the *environmental issues*, they are made up of two kinds of variables namely, the naturally occurring variables and artificiality which indeed may influence a study. Instances of naturally occurring variables are noise, temperature, adequacy of light, time of day and sitting arrangements (Brown *ibid*:30).

The second type of extraneous variables, which is also known as *grouping issues* may crop up according to Brown (*ibid.*) because of 'the initial composition of the groups involved or changes in the composition over time.' Such issues are referred to as (a) self-selection, (b) mortality, (c) maturation, of which only the first is relevant to our investigation. The last type of extraneous variables is that of *people issues* which is so termed because 'the attitudes of the people involved in a

study toward each other and toward the study can cause four major problems – the Hawthorne effect, the halo effect, subject expectancy and researcher expectancy' (Brown, 1988:37) – which have been briefly discussed in point 4.3.2. Since in this part of the work, we are dealing with the possible extaneous variables which may endanger the results of our study as a whole, it is propitious to define these four deriving from people' attitudes.

The Hawthorne effect which was first discovered in the Hawthorne plant in the United States, is defined by Cohen and Manion (1989:202) in these terms:

> Medical research has long recognised the psychological effects that arise out of mere participation in drug experiments, and placebos and double-blind designs are commonly employed to counteract the biasing effects of participation. Similarly, so called Hawthorne effects threaten to contaminate experimental treatments in educational research when subjects realise their role as guinea pigs.

It is noteworthy that the Hawthorne effect was questioned by such studies as Cook's (in Mouly, 1978:259) which found 'the Hawthorne effect in social research to be less serious than is generally assumed.' On the other hand, McMillan and Schumacher (1989:177) argue that the "label Hawthorne effect" endures insofar as 'subjects may become anxious, fake responses in order to look good, or react in many other ways because of their knowledge of aspects of the research'.

As for the Halo effect, Brown (1988:33) explains it as follows:

> This effect is due to the tendency among human beings to respond positively to a person they like. Such positive feelings could be reflected on all scales related to that person. The results on the scales could be more highly related to these positive feelings than to the actual characteristics of the person in question.

With regard to the third problem relating to the *people issues*, i.e subject expectancy, it derives from the halo effect and is translated into 'the natural tendency of people to want to please. It occurs when the subjects think they have figured out what a study is about and try to "help" the researcher to achieve the apparent

aims' (Brown, *ibid.*). To sum up the *people issues*, mention should be made of the researcher expectancy which like the participant expectancy may seriously alter the results of a study.

Another factor which may derive from the Hawthorne effect is the novelty effect that Gay (1976:171) defines as follows:

> the novelty effect refers to increased interest, motivation, or participation on the part of subjects simply because they are doing something different.

Having thus briefly covered the different threats to the external validity of a study, let us now consider which are relevant to our study and the means used to eradicate or minimize them.

4.5.1.1 Possible Extraneous Variables of the Present Study

Before undertaking the administration of our research tools, we have found it wiser to make an inventory of the various extraneous variables which may, in one way or another distort the outcome of the study. They are presented here in their possible occurrence order.

(1) Prior to the administration of each of the research instruments the field-worker had to make sure that the progress of the investigation would not be impeded by such environmental issues as noise (children playing near classes where questionnaires would be filled in, or visitors disturbing the on-going-interviews, and so forth), the inefficiency or lack of light in classrooms, the time of day (none of the instruments was administered either between noon and 3:00 p.m, or in the evenings). Furthermore, we had to make sure that nothing artificial was set up by the school administration because of our presence in schools. Finally, it should be noted that the aforementioned environmental issues could to some extent affect any

classroom observation, any interview session, or any questionnaire administration, all of which are encapsulated in our study.

(2) During the questionnaire administration, pupils of *sixième* and *cinquième*, or even of classes which have not been selected may be tempted (just to satisfy their curiosity) to discreetly take part in the investigation. Such self-selection form should be prevented so as not to jeopardize the results.

(3) If the preceding two major problems may be easily detectable because of their concreteness and can be solved on the spot, the following ones are more complex because they deal with human feelings, more difficult to apprehend. As we have seen in the previous paragraphs, any of our participants – whether those filling in questionnaires, or being interviewed, or observed – may be the source of subjectivity and bias because:

(a) they might be very pleased to have been included in the investigation;

(b) they might know the researcher and hence might try to please him, or help him 'cope' well with the research.

(c) they are doing something new, something different as noted by Gay (1976:171).

(d) they are to rate teachers and E.L.T. Advisers using Semantic Differential scales and Likert scales they may have, as noted by Mouly (1978:229):

> a general tendency to evaluate each of the individual's specific traits on the basis of a general overall impression or mental outlook rather than on the basis of the traits as they appear independently; [for example], in rating a supervisor [the participant] sees as incompetent, the rater is likely to rate him low in everything from intelligence to personal appearence.

So far, a description of the extraneous variables whose effects may somehow endanger our study has been made. It remains to explain what it takes to carry out such an investigation in Niger and how the research tools were administered.

4.5.2 Administering the Pupil Questionnaires

As already hinted, the questionnaire administration started in Niamey on the 3rd of May 1991, for the reasons advanced in the previous paragraphs. It is propitious at this stage to briefly give an account of how access to the respondents was secured. In effect, as in most research studies, the investigator had to go through a certain number of channels that Dingwal (1984) cited in Burgess (1984:258) referred to as 'a hierarchy of consent; a situation in which sponsorship is provided by individuals who stand in positions hierachically above those who are to be studied'. As a matter of fact, no researcher would undertake an inquiry without an authorization issued by the Minister of Higher Education, Research and Technology and National Education. In the case of the present inquiry, the ministerial authorisation was secured two days after the request. Although we had an official document we found it wiser to wait until (a) the various Inspectors whose areas are involved in the survey were contacted by the Director for Secondary Education, (b) the Inspectors got in touch with the Heads of schools, and (c) the latter informed their staff and the pupils, a strategy advocated in the following terms by Walker (1980:49) in Burgess (1984:258):

> To gain access to the school you need to first approach the Local Education Authority; to gain access to the staff, you need to approach th Head; to gain access to the pupils, you need to approach the staff. Each fieldwork contact is thus sponsored by someone in authority over those you wish to study.

4.5.2.1 Schools Located in Niamey

After the Chief Inspector for Secondary Education had been informed, the authorities of the selected schools were contacted two days before the time scheduled for the inquiry. Advantage was taken of such meetings to determine the exact number of questionnaires to put at the disposal of each school, and above all discuss

the gist of the research tool administration.

Thus, their attention was drawn to the fact that the pre-established selection (based on random sampling) should be respected and that under no circumstance should pupils of *sixième* or *cinquième* (apart from the few selected), or of any unselected classes be allowed to take part in the investigation. In effect, it may happen that a pupil of *quatrième* decides to be administered the questionnaires in *troisième* because s/he has friends there, and that after all no grade is to be given. This kind of self-selection if it occurs, may undoubtedly be damaging to the study. Henceforth, *the Surveillants Généraux* and the *Censeurs* of the selected schools were in charge of making sure that there would be no grouping problem (Brown, 1988:30-2).

In all the schools in Niamey, the fieldworker remained behind the investigation scene during the instrument administration. The reason is merely because of his close relations with the establishments located in this town (e.g Lycée Kassai, Groupe Scolaire Cheick Anta Diop, Summer Model School were under his supervision from 1986 to early 1990). Thus, Heads of schools, *Surveillants Généraux*, *Censeurs* and E.L.T. Advisers were in charge of the questionnaire administration.

Having finished with the selected schools of Niamey, the next localities where questionnaires had to be filled in were respectively Diffa, Mainé Soroa, Myrriah, Zinder, Tahoua, Konni, Tillabery and Kollo. Table 4.5 gives details as regards the period administration and the places. In all these localities, the same strategies were applied. However, unlike in Niamey, the investigator was more involved in the questionnaire administration because research assistants of the interior of the country did not have enough time to master all the investigation procedures.

Another point worth highlighting, is the fact that in the Département of

Zinder the questionnaire administration started the same day in Zinder (C.E.G 1) and in Myrriah (C.E.G 2) because of the short distance existing between the two localities. Thus, on 5th June the investigator was *à cheval* between the schools of Myrriah and Zinder, with a view to keeping up with school internal organization contraints.

Justice should be done to the students who took part in the investigation. In most places, at the end of the questionnaire administration they waited for the investigator to discuss not only the *tenant et aboutissant*, (i.e the *How*, the *When*, the *What* and the *Why*) of the research but also the school crisis. They mostly wanted to know why it took so long for Nigerien students to start such an investigation. Clearly, they showed a genuine interest in the survey and expressed the wish to be kept informed of the results deriving from the inquiry. Another instance of genuine interest in the study is that of the pupils of a school who were on strike, but because of the nature of the study, accepted to join their classes to be administered the questionnaires.

4.5.3 Administering the Teacher Questionnaires

In Niamey, as well as in the rest of the localities where the teacher questionnaire was administered, Heads of schools were in charge of randomly selecting teachers. They were also responsible for collecting the questionnaires, once they were completed.

For practical reasons, it was decided to start the survey in the interior of the country in the *Département* of Diffa, the most remote locality. Two advantages may be put forth to justify this choice: (a) it was less time consuming, and less

Table 4.5 — Questionaire Administration Schedule For Other Regions

Locality	Establishment	Date	Research Assistant
Diffa	Lycée I. Alaoma	3/6/91	Censeur & Surv. Général
Diffa	C.E.G	3/6/91	Head & Mr Moustapha Ibrahim
Mainé Soroa	C.E.G	4/6/91	Head & Surv. Gén.
Myrriah	C.E.G II	5/6/91	Head & 2 teachers
Zinder	C.E.G I	5/6/91	Mr Moussa Sana
Zinder	Lycée A.K. Daga	6/6/91	Principal & 2 Surv. Gén.
Zinder	E. N. A. Mohamed	7/6/91	Director & 2 Surv. Gén.
Zinder	C.E.G Bosso	7/6/91	Head
Tahoua	C.E.G II	10/6/91	Mr Acosta François
B. N' Konni	C.E.G	11/6/91	Head & Surv. Gén.
Tillabery	C.E.G I	12/6/91	Head
Tillabery	Lycée	13/6/91	Censeur & 2 ELT Advisers
Tillabery	E.N. Tanimoune	13/6/91	Head & 2 ELT Advisers
Kollo	C.E.G	14/6/91	Head & 2 teachers

strenuous than any other option, and (b) above all, it allowed us not only to give out teacher questionnaires to Heads of schools but also give teachers sufficient time to complete the questionnaires. In effect, before reaching Diffa, 4 other localities where the survey was to be carried out, had to be crossed; this enabled us to meet Heads of schools and give them teacher questionnaires. They had to randomly selected teachers and urge them to fill in the reseach tool by the time we returned. Henceforth, besides the teachers of Diffa who were taken by surprise (*vide supra*), all the other teachers had at least two days to complete the questionnaire.

In Tahoua, Tillabery and Kollo, localities where the fieldworker stayed just a day or so, teachers were given about a week to fill in the questionnaires, which in

the end were sent to us by the Inspectors responsible for these areas. However, as already mentioned, questionnaires from Tillabery teachers went astray, in spite of the efforts of the Inspector, the school Heads and the teachers who did complete the research instruments.

4.5.4 Administering the Interview

Unlike the questionnaire, the interview administration started earlier than scheduled, i.e in mid January 1991, but ended only in November/December of the same year. The types of people we set out to interview (*vide supra*), and of course the socio-political atmosphere (National Conference) that existed in 1991 in Niger may explain the rush and delays the interviews underwent.

With the exception of one or two instances, interviews were carried out in the interviewees' offices, venues chosen by the respondents themselves. Since the interview may at times appear threatening to certain respondents, the interviewers found it more sensible to start breaking the ice with a joke or a chat about *l'actualité du jour* which was then the National Conference (cf chap. 2). They were then briefed with the research purpose and told how long the interview was likely to last. It should be reported that in most cases respondents eagerly went beyond the suggested amount of time, for they argued that the present interviews were an opportunity to get their ideas at least in an academic work, which will not stay in the cupboards of the Ministry.

As is generally accepted, the major advantage that the interview has over the questionnaire is its adaptability. Thus in the course of the various interviews held, we were able 'to follow up ideas, probe responses and even investigate motives and feelings' (Bell 1987:70). In addition, as noted by Patton (1980) in Goetz and

LeCompte (1984:129) the fieldworkers 'also provided cues or explanations for shifts in interview focus and topic so that respondents can adapt their thinking to the new direction'. However, we should hasten to point out that most of the talking was done by the interviewees, because as Patton (*ibid.*:128) cautions:

> An interview transcript dominated by interviewer remarks customarily is indicative of a poorly trained or insensitive questioner. More important, it supplies less data than the interview is intended to elicit.

Finally, as in most qualitative research, the interviews carried out by the investigators were conducted in 'the conversational mode of everyday interaction' (Denzin 1978; Schatzman and Strauss 1973 in Goetz and LeCompte, *ibid.*), which conveys 'empathy, encouragement, and understanding' (Lofland (1971) in Goetz and LeCompte, *ibid.*). According to Patton (1980:128) this mode 'permits interviewers to remain neutral in response without risking adequate rapport.' Thus, conversational mode is agreed by all the above authorities to be familiar and comfortable to all respondents; therefore it 'is most likely to elicit the trust, confidence, and ease among respondents necessary for yielding elaborate, subtle, and valid data.' Goetz and LeCompte (*ibid.*:131).

4.6 Fighting Familiarity

Nowadays, it is customary for people to undertake research in settings with which they are familiar. A case in point is the fact that teachers and school supervisors carry out research in classrooms, medical doctors and nurses in hospitals, storytellers in libraries, and so forth. At the outset it should be pointed out that, in many cases, instead of being an advantage, familiarity with the working *milieu* turns out to be a serious problem which is thus explained by Atkinson (in Burgess, 1984:163)

> How can researchers conduct studies in situations with which they are familiar?

> [...] This problem is generic, and is particularly noticeable in studies of educational settings. [...] Almost by definition, academics have a particularly long and thorough personal acquaintance with education -as learners, and, sometimes as instructors as well. The problem of familiarity can therefore be massive.

Delamont (1981:71) notes that 'all ethnographic work is hard, but schools and classrooms do have a particular kind of familiarity that was beautifully captured by Philip Jackson (1968) which make it especially tough.' His description of the classroom is as follows:

> Not only is the classroom a relatively stable physical environment, it also provides a fairly constant social context. Behind the same old desks sit the same old students, in front of the familiar blackboard stands the familiar teacher (Jackson 1968:72 in Burgess 1985:123).

The familiarity problem (Wax & Wax, 1971) (Delamont 1981) (Burgess 1984) (Ely 1991:124-32) arises mostly because people acquainted with the educational environment tend to enter the field of research insufficiently prepared (Delamont in Burgess 1985:177); such researchers look at things the way they are used to seeing them, thus failing to pinpoint what is actually occurring. Furthermore, it becomes difficult for such researchers 'to question the taken for granted' (Atkinson *ibid.*), to 'see' things differently from the way they used to appear, in short, as put by Delamont (1981:74) 'to make the familiar strange'. Indeed, carrying out research in educational settings is found so overwhelming by some academics that Becker (1971:10) depicts it as follows:

> We may have understated a little the difficulty of observing contemporary classrooms. It is not just the survey method of educational testing or any of those things that keeps people from seeing what is going on. I think, instead, that it is first and foremost a matter of it all being so familiar that it becomes impossible to single out events that occur in the classroom as things that have occurred, even when they happen right in front of you. I have not had the experience of observing in elementary and high school classrooms myself, but I have in college classrooms and it takes a tremendous effort of will and imagination to stop seeing only things that are conventionally 'there' to be seen. I have talked to a couple of teams of research people who have sat around in classrooms trying to observe and it is like pulling teeth to get them to see or write anything beyond what 'everyone' knows.

Since the fieldworker is familiar with the setting under investigation, the following lines attempt to account for the extent to which familiarity was a handicap in the present study, and the strategies employed to render the familiar unfamiliar. First of all, the mere fact of being aware of the problems familiarity poses, long before undertaking the project, is in itself a step towards fighting the problem. In her article *All Too Familiar? A Decade of Classroom Research* (1981:71) Delamont hinted that the ignorance of the literature written on classroom or school ethnography may bring about the familiarity problem. Hence, our first step to better apprehend the familiarity problem was to make a thorough literature review about research in general and classroom ethnography in particular. Atkinson (in Burgess, 1984:163) has also commented in this vein:

> What I am suggesting is that while there is no necessity for a fieldworker to become an 'expert' in medicine (or whatever), it may be advantageous to become something of a 'well-informed citizen' in performing research.

In the case of the investigator, it must be noted that the "very ordinariness', 'routineness' and 'everydayness' of school and/or classroom did not confound" him, to use Delamont's expressions. The challenge he faced was to avoid seeing what was happening in the classroom through the eyes of the Ministry official that he is.

Having thus defined the type of familiarity, it remains to mention the strategy used to overcome the problem. Four strategies are advocated by Delamont (1981:*ibid.*): (1) study of unusual, bizarre or 'different' classrooms, (2) study of schools in other cultures, (3) study of non-educational settings, and (4) self-conscious strategies to make the familiar problematic. The latter is divided into two: (a) the self-conscious focus on a hitherto taken for granted feature of the school or the classroom, (b) approaches advocated by ethnomethodologists, such

as explicating the resources the researcher shares with members throughout the research process. Of these aforementioned strategies the fourth one, and more specifically the ethnomethodological approach was favoured. It is worth mentioning that throughout the investigator's stay in classrooms there was a fight within him, an inner fight that opposed the Inspector that he was and the researcher that he is. The aim was to remain alert, so as to give the classroom observations no 'inspectorial' connotations. This has led the fieldworker to observe classrooms with a group of teachers who served as the referee of the 'inner struggle'. As a matter of fact, as already mentioned, data collected in classrooms were cross-checked with those of the rest of the group (cf section 4.3.3.1). In sum, familiarity was fought through (1) learning about school and classroom ethnography, (2) constant awareness of being a social researcher and not an Inspector only looking for strong and weak points of teachers, (3) cross-checking data gathered by researcher and other teachers.

Chapter V

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

> *In practice, triangulation as a strategy provides a rich and complex picture of some social phenomenon being studied, but rarely does it provide a clear path to a singular view of what is the case. Because of the predominance of the assumption that triangulation will result in a single valid proposition, we look for the convergence of evidence and miss what I see as the greater value in triangulating. More accurately, there are three outcomes that might result from a triangulation strategy ...., convergence, inconsistency, and contradiction* **(Mathison, 1988, 15 in Ely *et al.* 1991:98).**

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter was devoted to the fieldwork organization which included a description of the various research instruments used in the fieldwork and the procedures employed to satisfactorily conduct the study. The present chapter will present, analyse and interpret the data obtained from the different research tools.

5.2 Samples Specifications

5.2.1 Students' Samples

As already stated in the previous chapter, the samples used to carry out the present investigation were drawn from the secondary school population in Niger. Stratified random sampling, multistage sampling and several others (*vide supra*) have enabled us to obtain samples from urban and rural, private and state Lycées

and C.E.G.s in 5 administrative regions of the country, including the capital, Niamey. Students from *sixième* to *terminale* were administered the same questionnaire. The table on the next page gives more details as to the identification of the samples under study.

Having taken the school and the class as sample units for practical reasons (time and research assistant restrictions) entire classes were considered rather than individuals as such. Considering the girls/boys ratio in schools and in classes in particular, it is not then surprising to come across classes of, let us say, 45 with less than 10 girls. This situation is reflected in our samples where the majority of the participants are male (67.2%) and about 1/3 (32.7%) female. Table 5.1 also tells us that less than half of the students live with their parents. Amongst those who do not live with their parents, 44.6 % are put up with *tuteurs*, i.e into lodgings, and 3.2% live by themselves. In terms of their schooling, the same table shows that more than half of the students (54.6%) have never repeated a class (i.e 'normal schooling'), while 44.0% had repeated a class at least once. Of the 7 different forms that make up the schooling system, the *troisième* class is the hurdle at which students stumble the most (16.4%). Regarding the nature of the schools from which the samples were drawn, it may be said that the vast majority (87.2%) came from state schools while the remaining group (12.8%) from private schools. As far as the classes are concerned, it should be pointed out that *quatrième* and *troisième* made up the majority of the samples (25.3% and 23.3%, respectively).

5.2.2 Teachers' Sample

Out of the 133 teachers who filled in the questionnaire the majority, (68.4%)

Table 5.1 — Specifications Concerning Students

Value	Frequency	%
Boys	1201	67.2
Girls	585	32.7
Live with Parents	843	47.1
Put up into Logdings	797	44.6
Live by Themselves	57	3.2
Repeat Class	786	44.0
Normal Schooling	976	54.6
State School Students	1559	87.2
Private School Students	229	12.8
Lycée Students	692	38.7
C.E.G Students	1096	61.3
Sixième Students	83	4.6
Cinquième Students	143	8.0
Quatrième Students	453	25.3
Troisième Students	417	23.3
Seconde A Students	98	5.5
Seconde C Students	146	8.2
Première A Students	131	7.3
Première C Students	25	1.4
Première D Students	168	9.4
Terminale A Students	70	3.9
Region One Students	179	10.0
Region Two Students	542	30.3
Region Three Students	232	13.0
Region Four Students	365	20.4
Region Five Students	470	26.3
N =	1788	
From 6e to Terminale		100.0

belong to the first cycle; as regards the nature of the schools from which the teachers came, it can be said that the vast majority (90.2%) are from state schools. More than half of the teachers (69.9%) have a working experience ranging from 3 to 10 years. Another specificity to mention concerning the teachers is that there are more English teachers in the sample than any other subject teachers (25 out of 133), i.e 18.8%. The lowest number of teachers recorded is in Physical Education (1 teacher). Finally, there are more male teachers (87.2%) in the sample than female teachers (9.8%).

5.2.3 Interviewees' Sample

All the 14 persons who were interviewed are male. Two female ministry administrators initially agreed to be interviewed, but in the end declined the invitation because they were involved in the National Conference. It should also be said that 8 of them have been working for the Ministry for more than 25 years, 3 for a period ranging between 15 and 20 years, 1 for 10 years, the remaining 2 being students' parents. Furthermore, 5 of the interviewees have occupied responsibility posts at the national level.

5.2.4 Specifications About the Teachers Observed

Altogether 10 teachers including 4 females were observed in Niamey the capital. The average working experience is about 4 years. Of these 10 teachers, 4 were observed in a second cycle school while the remaining 6 presented their lessons in first cycle schools. Most of the lessons we attended were a combination of vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing.

5.3 Some Statistical Considerations

Three of our research instruments need statistical means to be analysed and interpreted. They are the pupil questionnaire, the teacher questionnaire and the classroom observation records. As for the interviews and archival records, qualitative approaches will be used to deal with the data collected. Having said this, let us consider the first two research tools and endeavour to describe the different levels of measurements, i.e find out whether we are dealing with nominal, ordinal, interval data or with variables measured on a ratio scale. In effect as pointed out by Norusis (1987:81)

> the way in which you analyse your data depends on how you've measured it. Certain analyses make sense with certain types of data. Even something as simple as interpreting cumulative percentages requires you to know what scale your data are measured on.

A quick glance at both types of questionnaires will reveal that the bulk of the data collected through the questionnaires are ordinal data 'where objects are rated in importance of size, or through attitude scales using gradations of agreement' (Likert Scale, Semantic Differential). The remaining data, would be categorized as nominal because dealing with names enabling us to identify the respondents.

Having thus defined the levels of measurement used in the research tools, it remains to be stated what we intend to obtain from the data. Bearing in mind that there exist permissible and non permissible operations for each of the four types of scale, our first concern is to get frequency counts and percentages to start describing the data. Secondly, since samples were achieved through stratified random sampling, it is our intention to draw inferences concerning the relationships and differences found in the data. In order to do this, two major types of statistical tools may be used to draw inferences: *parametric* statistics and *nonparametric* statistics.

Thus, parametric statistics make various assumptions about characteristics of the population from which a sample has been selected (Borg, 1987:145). Briefly, this entails that populations and the samples from which they are drawn demonstrate certain parameters, i.e, that means and standard deviation are common attributes of parametric data (Leedy,1989:207). As for the last type of statistical tools 'they make few if any assumptions about the characteristics of the population' (Borg, 1987:145). Siegel (1956:31) gives a more detailed explanation of nonparametric statistics:

> A nonparametric statistical test is a test whose model does not specify conditions about the parameters of the population from which the sample was drawn. Certain assumptions are associated with most nonparametric statistic tests, i.e., that the observations are independent and that the variable under study has underlying continuity, but these assumptions are fewer and much weaker than those associated with parametric tests...Most nonparametric tests apply to data in an ordinal scale, and some apply also to data in a nominal scale.

Although parametric statistics have the advantage of being more powerful than nonparametric statistics (Borg, 1987:145), we cannot use them on the account of the following explanation and warning given by Siegel (1956:3-23):

> (a) it is permissible to use the parametric techniques only with scores which are truly numerical. Many nonparametric tests, on the other hand, focus on the order or ranking of the scores, not their "numerical" values, and other nonparametric techniques are useful with data for which even ordering is impossible (i.e., with classifactory data.)
>
> (b) parametric statistical tests, which use means and standard deviations (i.e., which require the operations of arithmetic on the original scores), ought not to be used in data on an ordinal scale. The properties of an ordinal scale are *not* isomorphic to the numerical system known as arithmetic.

In a few words we can then say, because of the nature of the data (based on nominal and ordinal scale), the type of inferential statistic tool to refer to is unmistakebly nonparametric statistics. As to the types of nonparametric test to employ, they are determined by what it is intended to be worked out from the data. Of the various tools of nonparametric statistics Chi Square, Wilcoxon Signed

rank test, Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis test, only the last two will be employed along with frequency distributions, to answer the research questions. The Mann-Whitney U test is the nonparametric equivalent to the metric t-test being capable of showing whether two independent groups have been drawn from the same population. In the case of the present work the binary groups male/female, rural/urban, private/state, first cycle/second cycle, are considered as instances of independent samples. Henceforth, this nonparametric test suits best the data dealing with the aforementioned various two independent groups.

In our analysis we also need to compare scores in more than two groups to find out whether the different samples are from different populations. In addition, we would also like to find out, according to Siegel (1956:184), 'whether the differences among the samples signify genuine population differences or whether they represent merely chance variations such as are to be expected among several random samples from the same population'. Thus the Kruskal-Wallis test is to be used to achieve this statistical analysis for "it seems to be the most efficient of the nonparametric tests for k independent samples" Siegel (*ibid.*:194).

5.3.1 Level of Probability

In the present study the probability of 0.05 is taken as a level suitable for rejection of the null hypothesis. This entails that a probabilily value of the item below 0.05 shows a statistically significant difference between the opinions of the participants. In other words, if the difference in responses between respondents is reported to be significant at the 0.05 level, then such a difference would be attributed to chance in only five in a hundred.

5.3.2 About Generalization and Level of Analysis

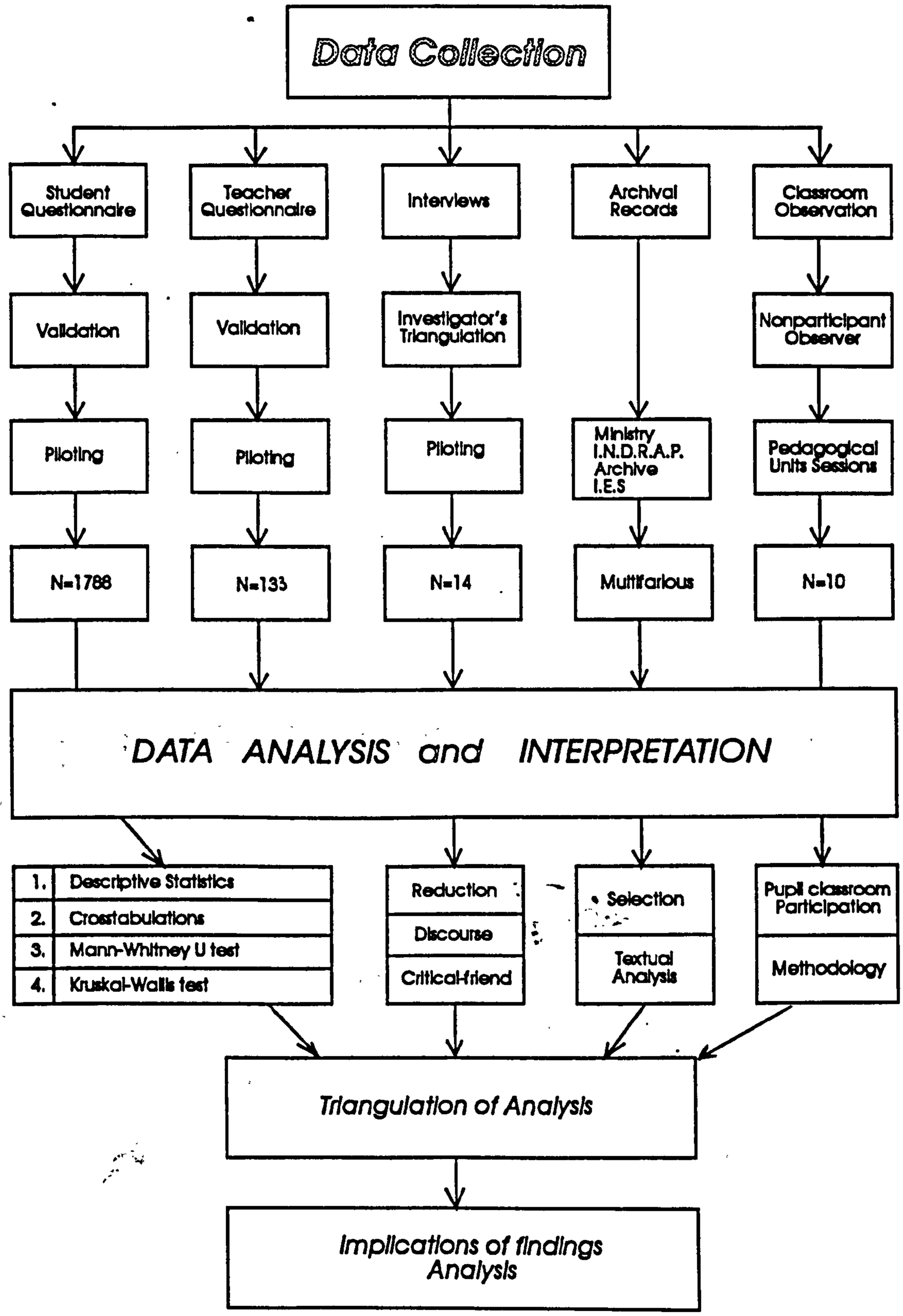
We have found it justified to generalize because it has been demonstrated in the research design chapter that we have been very careful to have a very representative sample which includes all the main perceived elements by which one population could be differentiated from another (for example, geographical location, sex, nature of schools, education levels). Another reason why we can generalize resides in the fact that the nonparametric measurements used are designed to enable one to generalize; thus built in the Mann-Whitney U test is the ability to generalize with gender, or in the Kruskal-Wallis the ability to generalize with regions. Furthermore, we have not only demonstrated content validity and construct validity, but also concurrent validity through the use of many methods.

In a research study of this kind where evaluation is one of the key words, one cannot help tackling many areas of the education system at a time because the system itself is a whole, which entails that its parts overlap. However, we should hasten to add that an unnecessary move between the various levels was ruled out throughout the data analysis and interpretation as suggested by Vulliamy, Lewin and Stephens (1990:56) interpretation as suggested by Vulliamy, Lewin and Stephens (1990:56)

> educational research can be undertaken at the level of the individual, the learning group, the classroom, the school, the district, the country, or internationally. Phenomena at one level inevitably interact with those at others, but it is wise precaution to resist the temptation to slide easily between levels in analysis and interpretation.

As previously shown our research collected and analyzed data at different levels: the students, the teachers, the school administrators, parents as individuals; classroom, school, and country level (geographically). Finally throughout our analysis and interpretation of the qualitative data, we have scrupulously observed

Research Design / Data Analysis & Interpretation Chart



the following 8 suggestions made by Hutchinson, Hopkins & Howard (1988:59-62), i.e:

- Being alert to the threats of validity;
- Being clear about analysis;
- Calling things by their right names;
- Knowing what one is looking for;
- Triangulating;
- Being catholic in the use of data sources;
- Reduce and display data;
- Use case studies systematically.

5.4 Data Presentation

5.4.1 Introduction

Before presenting the data, a certain number of remarks in connection with some of the missing cases should be made, though we know that it is not always easy to justify them.

1. First and foremost, it should be pointed out that in this study we are dealing with human beings who as such are very complex. Indeed at times, some people do not answer a question not because it does not suit them or it is beyond their understanding, but simply because of human vagaries that they themselves cannot explain.

2. The fieldwork took place during a period of turmoil within the country. Teach-

ers and students alike were struggling to enhance not only the education system but also the social and economic conditions of the country.

3. There are school subjects which are sex, or class oriented. Thus, there are subjects which are studied by only girls or by students of a given cycle. Below are the subjects which are limited to either sex or class level:

(a) Students of *sixième* and *cinquième* do not take Physics and Chemistry;

(b) First cycle and *seconde* (second cycle) students do not take Philosophy;

(c) Only girls take domestic science lessons;

(d) The vast majority of students choose English as the foreign language to study, which means that the questionnaire items relating to Arabic, German and Spanish are dealt with by a very limited number of students.

In a nutshell, an average of 50 to 60 missing cases (out of 1788 cases), for which we cannot give an explanation, are observed in the course of the analysis. Had it been interval data, one could have calculated the significance of missing cases in terms of the standard error. However, considering what has been said heretofore the participation of the respondents may be viewed as satisfactory.

The other point worth mentioning is in connection with some of the data we have not referred to. As already mentioned the present work is the first so far undertaken by a member of the ministry. This opportunity it is believed had to be seized to investigate (on large scale) such issues as (a) the threshold at which students may be expelled, or allowed to stay back or move to upper classes, (b) students' job orientation, (c) teachers views about the current problems impeding the educational system which are not directly linked to the study, yet crucial for the Ministry of Education.

Though Arabic is one of the subjects the questionnaires dealt with, it has not been discussed here, simply to avoid engaging again in the debate about national languages. It is one of the 10 national languages acknowledged by the National Conference (cf Chap 2), and yet is taught only as a foreign language in the higher level of secondary education. Again the result concerning this specific language will be the concern of the Ministry.

Finally it should be pointed out that the researcher has tackled the data bearing in mind Mathison's caution (Ely *et al.*, 1991:98) regarding 'the danger of throwing out useful information' which is brought about by the fact of 'focussing too tightly only on the purpose of finding convergent evidence'. As advised by Mathison (*ibid.*), we have reported inconsistent and contradictory findings as they stood, inasmuch as they may help us to refine and revise our framework and findings.

5.4.2 Expectations From the Data and the Statistics

At this stage, a recapitulation of the problems that the study seeks to investigate may be necessary. It is the author's belief that although the educational system experiences problems of many kinds, and at times may give to those concerned the impression that nothing is working, English as a subject is doing well. It is also the researcher's belief that if English enjoys success, it is because it has been undergoing innovations of many kinds. In order to test the investigator's hypothesis a set of ten questions relating to 6 areas of the educational system will be treated in turn, along with the different research tools employed in the course of the fieldwork. These areas are found in most of the research instruments and are referred to as:

(a) Students' Perceptions, Attitudes Towards School and Their School Motivational Orientation;

(b) Students' Perceptions of the Curriculum. One or two subjects in each of the major components of the curriculum – i.e Languages, Humanities, Mathematics and Science will be discussed alongside the teaching materials, the teaching staff relating to the subjects under study;

(c) Perceived Parental Encouragement;

(d) Students' Perceptions, Attitudes Towards English and Their Motivational Orientation;

(e) Innovations Implemented in English Language Teaching in Niger (syllabus design, textbook design, curriculum development, training of trainers, teacher education, examinations);

(f) Suggested Solution for the Enhancement of the System.

5.4.3 Education Area I: Students' Perceptions, Attitudes Toward School

At the outset, we should point out that question relating to Education Area I is of utmost importance because one has to know what students' perceptions and attitudes are towards school and the curriculum before trying to answer any further questions. This question forms the basis for the remainder of the questions to be answered since if it comes out that a high proportion of Nigérien students have negative attitudes and perceptions about school, then the rest of the questions we have posed will not hold. In effect, it would be difficult, if not impossible to analyse the success that English appears to enjoy.

Furthermore, the answers to these first two questions will confirm or invali-

date the views (held by many parents, some education administrators as well as some teachers) according to which (a) standards are falling because pupils do not like school or because they do not know why they are at school; (b) there exist regions where students are less receptive to school, (c) pupils in rural areas are less interested in school than their urban counterparts, (d) pupils in private schools are less motivated than those in state schools.

5.4.3.1 Students' School Liking or Disliking

a) Students' Liking of School

Figure 5.2 which is the frequency and percentage counts table reveals that out of a sample of 1788 students, 1286 (71.9%) strongly agree to liking school very much, while 332 (18.6%) just agree with liking school very much. **Thus an overall of 90.5% agree with liking school.**

As for those who strongly disagree with liking school very much their number amounts to 45 (2.5%); if we add up to them those who simply disagree (14 students or .8%) with the question put to them, **it can then be said that the students who do not like school represent only 3.3% of the total population.** The same table shows that 72 students, i.e 4.0% did not make up their minds as to whether they liked school or not. Another aspect the statistics point to is that 2.2% of the sample did not answer the question at all, maybe a way to show their indifference towards the educational institution.

Teachers are divided on this issue for only **44.4% of them believe that the majority of the students like school** while the same number of teachers (44.4%) think the opposite.

The vast majority of the **interviewees** (12 out of 14) acknowledge that broadly

speaking students are reluctant about school, that school liking depends on the students' background, and their residence. Comments include:

> Dans la mesure où le monde rural est nettement plus peuplé que les centres urbains, on peut penser que l'attitude modèle, l'attitude la plus courante est donc celle de rejet de l'institution scolaire et celle-là se retrouve en majorité en milieu rural (Interview transcript No. 4).

> Il y a differentes catégories sociales au Niger; il y a les enfants des élites qui sont assez sensibilisés, assez renseignés, qui sont disons, en avance par rapport à la question posée; eux ont une attitude différente des enfants de la masse qui constituent la majorité de la population Nigérienne (Interview transcript No. 2).

One of the few respondents who agree (without reservation) that broadly speaking, students like school puts forward a solid argument based on the fact that the huge increase of the school population and of schools undoubtedly shows that the educational institution is by and large accepted by students. The following lines are part of his comments:

> Pour ma part, je pense que les élèves nigériens ont une attitude positive face à l'école en tant qu'institution. En témoignent l'évolution des effectifs, le nombre des établissements et des classes du secondaire par exemple (Interview transcript No. 3).

Table 5.2 — Item 11: I Like School Very Much / Frequency & Percentage Counts

Value	Freq.	Perc.
1	45	2.5
2	14	.8
3	72	4.0
4	332	18.6
5	1286	71.9
Missing	39	2.2
Total	1788	100.0

As regards students' school liking according to sex, the Mann-Whitney

U test in table 5.3 suggests highly significant differences amongst students (P = 0.0000). The crosstabulation figure reveals (a) a very low incidence of girls in cells 1 and 2 (**Strongly Disagree**, and **disagree**); (b) a very high incidence of girls in cell 5 (**Strongly Agree**); the increase from cell 4 (**Agree**) to cell 5 in girls is huge (66.6%) and ends up on a high frequency (81.3 %); (c) low incidence of boys in cells 1 and 2, but not as low as girls in those cells; d) higher incidence of boys in cell 5, but this increase from cells 4 to 5 (48.8%) is not as much as girls' and ends up on a lower frequency than girls (69.8%). In other words **girls, generally speaking, answered that very question more favourably than boys.** This view, however, is not shared by some of the interviewees who believe that because of the tradition, girls tend to have a less positive attitude towards school than boys. The following lines are an excerpt from such comments:

> L'attitude peut dépendre du sexe de l'élève. L'enfant fille vous savez chez nous, on dit que l'école n'est pas faite en milieu rural pour les filles. Ce qui fait d' ailleurs, et vous le constatez, qu'il y a moins de filles que de garçons en milieu rural (Interview transcript No. 1).

Table 5.3 also tells us that **urban and rural students'** responses significantly differ (P < 0.05), to the amazement of the researcher (cf Chap 6) **for students from rural areas seem to agree with the question more than students from urban settlements.** In effect, the crosstabulation reveals that **94.4% of the rural students strongly or just agree with liking school very much,** while **this figure in urban schools falls to (90.0%).** From the same table it is observed that **there are more students from rural schools who strongly disagree with the question (3.1%) than in urban areas (2.4%).** The aggregates of cells 1 and 2 show a very narrow 'negative' lead by the rural students (3.4%) compared to (3.3%) for the urban students. This suggests that very few students from rural or urban schools strongly or just disagree with liking

school very much, and what is more, that the first outnumber the second. It should be said in passing that as in many circumstances, there are students who did not make up their minds, as far as this question is concerned. There are more students from rural schools (1.8%) who did not make up their minds than in urban schools (.9%). **In sum, what the crosstabulation table tells us is that, broadly speaking, more rural students agree with liking school than students attending urban educational institutions.**

However, it should be pointed out that this statistically significant result (P = 0.0117) is at a variance with the view of the majority of the interviewees. In effect, 8 interviewees out of 14 believe that **generally speaking, students from urban areas enjoy school more than those living in rural areas.** The following lines contain such a view held by one of the respondents:

> En général, dans le milieu rural les gens sont réticents à l'école, à part quelques parents qui ont vu leurs enfants réussir. Ceux-ci encouragent les enfants à fréquenter l'école. Mais d' une manière générale, les parents sont très réticents à la fréquentation dans la mesure où pour eux c'est une perte. L'enfant rural, à sept ans est très opérationnel, car si c'est un fils de pêcheur, il va avec son père, si c'est un fils de cultivateur, il va avec son père. Donc voilà ce qu'on appelle le manque à gagner. Alors, les parents voient ce manque à gagner quand ils envoient leurs enfants à l'école. Et l'enfant aussi a la même attitude (Interview transcript No. 1).

Another statistical reality that table 5.3 reveals is in connection with the **nature of schools.** The probability value shows that the difference between private and state students' responses is significant below the 0.05 level. A glance at the crosstabulation shows a low incidence of both private and public school students in cells 1 and 2 (1.8%, 2.7% respectively). **This suggests that there are more students pertaining to state schools who dislike school than there are in private schools.** Similarly, a very high incidence of students from both private and public schools is noticeable in cell 5. However, it should be added that the increase from cells 4 to 5 is greater in private schools than state schools (68.0%

and 52.6% respectively). The combination of cells 4 and 5 reveals that **students from private schools like school more than those in state schools (96.0% and 92%, respectively)**. Finally there are more state school students who were indecisive than private school ones (4.4% and 2.2%, respectively).

Table 5.3 — Item 11: I Like School Very Much / Mann-Whitney U test: Q11 by Sex, Area, School Status, and by levels

Variables	Mean Rank	U Value	P
Male	840.18		
Female	945.07	295971.0	0.0000
Urban	863.08		
Rural	921.12	232408.0	0.0117
Private	951.78		
State	863.41	155889.0	0.0014
First Cycle	936.98		
Second Cycle	778.50	298224.0	0.0000

Regarding the variable relating to the educational level (First/Second Cycle), table 5.3 reveals that the Mann-Whitney U test suggests that the difference between the two groups is highly significant. This highly significant result is translated into the fact that there is (a) a low incidence of first and second cycle students in cells 1 and 2 (3.0% and 3.9% respectively); (b) a high incidence of first cycle students in cell 5 (80.8%); (c) the increase from cells 4 to 5 in the same students is very huge (67.4%); (d) a lower incidence of second cycle students (62.3%) (compared to first cycle students) in cell 5; the increase from cell 4 to 5 in second cycle students (34.7%) is much lower than that of first cycle students. The sum of the results form cells 4 and 5 enables us to say that **there are more students in first**

cycle schools who strongly or just agree with liking school very much than in second cycle schools (94.2% and 89.9%, respectively).

The crosstabulation also tells us that students from second cycle schools were more indecisive about the question than first cycle students (6.1% and 2.8%, respectively). It can then be concluded from what has been said so far that **generally speaking, first cycle and second cycle students strongly agree or just agree with liking schooling, but that the first group contains more people who enjoy school.**

Table 5.4 — Item 11: I Like School Very Much / Kruskal-Wallis test: Q11 by Regions

Regions	Mean Rank	Rank Order	P
One	934.88	1	
Two	880.54	4	
Three	922.99	2	0.0002
Four	894.34	3	
Five	808.18	5	

The Kruskal-Wallis test table (figure 5.4) suggests that the difference between the 5 regions is statistically significant (P=0.0002). Again, when referring to the crosstabulation it is found out that **the region where students gave a more positive response to the question is region One (95.4% of the students strongly or just agree with liking school very much). Region Five is the one which registered the lowest figure, i.e 90.1%**, compared to 93.7% in Region Two, 92.6% in Region Four and 92.0% in Region Three.

The crosstabulation also reveals that Regions Two and Three have more stu-

dents who strongly disagree or just disagree with liking school (3.9% for each). These regions are followed by Region Five (3.2%), Region Four (2.6%) and Region One (2.4%). Finally, it is noteworthy that the results provided by the Kruskal-Wallis test and the crosstabulation are not in all respects identical because (1) the first is a test between 5 cells (the 5 regions) and (2) the latter is a test between 25 cells, i.e the 5 Regions by the 5 possible answers to the question (Strongly Agree, Agree, Do not Know, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). However, since the aspect we are concerned with is the differences between regions, and since in that respect the Kruskal-Wallis is a more powerful test than the crosstabulation, we have been advised to give more weight to the results deriving from the Kruskal-Wallis test. One of the Ministry officials acknowledged that in his administrative entity students have a lot of problems which make them view school negatively. He referred to his Region as the locality where (1) **the schooling rate is the lowest, (2) young people prefer to go to Nigeria to earn money rather than study (3) for some parents, a child who attends school is a lost child.** the next few lines are in substance the arguments held by the respondent:

> Le département de 'X' est un département particulier. C'est le département où il y a le plus faible taux de scolarisation.... Donc, en plus des raisons que j'ai évoquées pour l'ensemble du Niger, il y a des raisons qui sont spécifiques à la région même. D'abord il y a le fait que dans la zone nomade, les enfants ont des problèmes quelques fois pour rejoindre leurs écoles. Il y a en fait certains endroits comme 'N' ou bien 'Y'. En plus de cela dans les zones sédentaires, leurs problèmes spécifiques, c'est la frontière avec le Nigeria. Les gens préfèrent aller chercher de l'argent très jeunes; il y a aussi le fait qu'il y a eu quelques éléments qui ont été à l'école, puis qui ne viennent pas souvent à la maison de sorte que la famille considère que l'enfant qui va à l'école est un enfant perdu pour la famille (Interview transcript No. 5).

These results are also supported by archival records which state that the schooling rate in the *Département* of Diffa for instance is not only low but also that truancy is commonplace at the level of primary education as shown below:

> La fréquentation est mauvaise dans les départements de Diffa et Zinder (Synthèse des Rapports de Rentée 1988-1989:4)

> D'une manière générale elle [la féquentation] est assez bonne dans les centres urbains. En zone rurale, elle est mauvaise surtout dans les écoles situées dans la bande sud, le long de la frontière où les populations s'attachent plus aux activités lucratives qu'à l'école. (Synthèse des Rapports de Fin d'Année 1988-1989:4)

b) Students' Dislike of School

Before going any further it should be pointed out that many items had their antonyms in order not only to find out how consistent students were in their responses, but also to be in a better position to support our analysis of the data. Thus results, for instance from tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 after analysis are also to be compared with tables 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, the same procedure will be operated on positively/negatively worded items, which it is expected will yield -to some degree- opposite results.

So far we know that 90.5% of the sample (cf table 5.2), irrespective of sex, residence, school status, education level, strongly agree or agree with liking school very much. On the other hand, 3.3% of the same sample strongly disagree or disagree with the question. What we then want to know is the way students respond when they are asked the opposite question, i.e whether they hate school or not. Thus, the frequency and percentage counts relating to that question (Table 5.5) show that **81.8% of the respondents answered to strongly disagree or disagree with hating school**; as for those who **strongly agree or agree with hating school their figure amounts to 6.5%.** It can be pointed out that **there is not much discrepancy between the results in tables 5.2 and 5.5** given the fact it is difficult if not impossible to obtain exactly the same results with positively/negatively worded questions. What we are interested in is the fact that the percentage of students who like school is high while that of students who hate school is low. **Broadly speaking, only a few students strongly agree or**

Table 5.5 — Item 16: I Dislike School Very Much / Frequency and Percentage counts

Value	Freq.	Perc.
1	52	2.9
2	65	3.6
3	133	7.4
4	463	25.9
5	1000	55.9
Missing	75	4.2
Total	1788	100.0

just agree with hating school (7.5%).

The Mann-Whitney U test in table 5.6 suggests that the difference between male and female students is statistically significant (P= 0.0055). **There are more female students who strongly disagree or just disagree with hating school (88.0%) than male students (86.2%).** Conversely, **there are less female students** who strongly agree or just agree with hating school (6.1%) than male students (7.2%).

The same table shows that the difference in rural and urban students' responses is statistically significant (P= 0.0034). In effect, unlike in table 5.3, **urban students who strongly or just disagree with hating school are more numerous (86.4%) than rural students (81.4%).** However, there are less **students in rural schools** who strongly or just agree with hating school. Finally, it should be noted that **no statistical significance was achieved** when the test took into account the variables **nature of the schools** (i.e private / state) and **education levels** (i.e first cycle / second cycle).

Table 5.6 — Item 16: I Dislike School Very Much / Mann-Whitney U test: Q16 by Sex, Area, School Status, and by levels

Variables	Mean Rank	U Value	P
Male	876.80		
Female	814.17	297577.0	0.0055
Urban	841.37		
Rural	918.03	216697.0	0.0034
Private	808.19		
State	864.18	153492.0	0.0760
First Cycle	862.68		
Second Cycle	848.26	344428.5	0.5047

The Kruskal-Wallis test in table 5.7 suggests that the differences between the regions, as far as item 16 is concerned is not significant. The 5 regions have approximately the same mean (883.82 to 839.91). However, as the crosstabulation indicates, **there are more students from Region One who strongly disagree or disagree to hating school than in any of the 5 Regions.**

Table 5.7 — Item 16: I Dislike School Very Much / Kruskal-Wallis test: Q16 by Regions

Regions	Mean Rank	Rank Order	P
One	883.82	1	
Two	842.95	4	
Three	839.91	5	0.7431
Four	872.20	2	
Five	859.75	3	

5.4.3.2 Students' Interest in School

Table 5.8 which gives the frequency and percentage counts relating to **truancy** reveals that the **vast majority of students (83.5%) strongly or just agree** that a student should not miss a lesson without a valid reason, while **9.8% strongly disagree or simply disagree** with that statement. The same table shows that the number of indecisive students represents half of the number of those who did not agree with the statement.

The Mann-Whitney U test represented in table 5.9 suggests that the difference in male and female students is statistically highly significant (P=0.0000). The crosstabulation shows a clear lead by female students who strongly or agree with the question (89.3%), compared to 83.7% for male students. Conversely, there are less girls who strongly disagree or simply disagree (7.5%) than boys (11.2%). It can be concluded that **female students oppose truancy more than male students would.**

Table 5.8 — Item 17: I Think That a Student Should Not Miss a Lesson Without a Valid Reason / Frequency & Percentage Counts

Value	Freq.	Perc.
1	103	5.8
2	71	4.0
3	78	4.4
4	366	20.5
5	1127	63.0
Missing	43	2.4
Total	1788	100.0

Table 5.9 — Item 17: I Think That a Student Should Not Miss a Lesson Without a Valid Reason / Mann-Whitney U test: Q17 by Sex

Variables	Mean Rank	U Value	Prob. Value
Male	843.25		
Female	933.21	299256.0	0.0000

Table 5.10 — Item 12: I Very Often Go to School Late / Frequency & Percentage Counts

Value	Freq.	Perc.
1	554	31.0
2	390	21.8
3	118	6.6
4	407	22.8
5	248	13.9
Missing	71	4.0
Total	1788	100.0

Table 5.11 which deals with **students' punctuality** – in terms of frequency and percentage counts – shows that about half of the students (52.8%) strongly disagree or just disagree with the statement. This implies that a bit **more than half of the sample are punctual students** while the **vast majority of the other half strongly or just agree with very often arriving late at school (46.7%).**

As regards the same statement relating to **punctuality,** the probability value in Table 5.11 shows that the difference between male and female students' responses is statistically highly significant (P=0.0000). A glance at the crosstabulation table

reveals that 63.9% of female students strongly disagree or disagree with going to school late very often, while just half of the male students disagree with the statement (50.5%). This means that, broadly speaking, **female students report they are more punctual than male students.** Similarly, **there are more male students who strongly agree or just agree that they very often go late to school (42.4%), compared to 29.5% with female students.**

Table 5.11 — Item 12: I Very Often Go to School Late / Mann-Whitney U test: Q12 by Sex

Variables	Mean Rank	U Value	Prob. Value
Male	907.53		
Female	758.88	269066.0	0.0000

Respondents were also asked to express their view as to what extent **school made them sad.** The figures in Table 5.12 show that **the majority of the students (79.2%) irrespective of sex, nature of the school, education level, or residence strongly disagree or just disagree with the statement that going to school makes them sad.** The ratio of those who **strongly agree or just agree with the statement, is less than 10% of the total population.** The other minority fraction of students are those who did not make up their minds (7.9%).

With regard to the same statement, the Mann-Whitney U test was administered to find out about the existence or non-existence of difference between the answers of male and female students. The results in Table 5.13 reveals that one does exist which is statistically significant below the 0.05 level (P=0.0004). In

order to find out where and how this difference lies, reference has been made to a crosstabulation. It shows that the aggregate of cells 1 and 2 i.e (**strongly disagree** and **disagree**) is not only much higher than the aggregate of the remaining 3 cells, but also that there are more female students (86.1%) who strongly disagree or just disagree with the statement than male students (80.1%). As for those who strongly agree or disagree with the statement that going to school makes them sad, the figure is higher with male students (10.1%) than with female students (9.0%). **Thus, broadly speaking, female students say they are more eager to go to school than male students.**

Table 5.12 — Item 20: Going to School Makes Me Sad / Frequency & Percentage Counts

Value	Freq.	Perc.
1	991	55.4
2	426	23.8
3	142	7.9
4	103	5.8
5	65	3.6
Missing	61	3.4
Total	1788	100.0

Table 5.13 — Item 20: Going to School Makes Me Sad / Mann-Whitney U test: Q20 by Sex

Variables	Mean Rank	U Value	Prob. Value
Male	890.01		
Female	809.17	297527.0	0.0004

Table 5.14 which represents the frequency and percentage counts of item 22 **(dealing with always avoiding coming to school late).** This table shows that 8.3% of the entire population strongly disagree or simply disagree with the statement, **which suggests that only a small minority of students do not make efforts to avoid coming late to school. As for those who strongly agree or agree with always avoiding coming late to school they constitute the vast majority (85.9%).** As in any inquiry there are people who do not make up their minds. In the present instance, only 2.7% were indecisive.

The next table is the Mann-Whitney U test (Table 5.15) which shows that the difference between male and female students' answers to item 22 is statistically significant ($P < 0.05$). The crosstabulation table reveals that this statistically significant result is translated into the fact that **the percentage of students who strongly or strongly agree with the statement is higher in female students' cells (90.3%) compared to 87.8% in male students' cells.** About the same number of male and female students strongly disagree or disagree with the statement, though this number is lower with the latter group of students (8.9% and 8.0% respectively). There are more indecisive male students regarding this question, than female students (3.3% and 1.6%, respectively).

Table 5.15 — Item 22: I Always Avoid Coming Late to School/ Mann-Whitney U test: Q22 by Sex

Variables	Mean Rank	U Value	Prob. Value
Male	849.68		
Female	899.95	309409.0	0.0261

Table 5.14 — Item 22: I Always Avoid Coming Late to School / Frequency & Percentage Counts

Value	Freq.	Perc.
1	81	4.5
2	68	3.8
3	48	2.7
4	531	29.7
5	1004	56.2
Missing	56	3.1
Total	1788	100.0

Another issue on which students were asked to express their view is **life at school.** Table 5.16 tells us that **87.2% of the sample find life at school very interesting** whilst **only 5% do not.** The same table also tells us that the difference between the responses of male and female students is statistically significant, below the 0.05 level. Referring to the crosstabulation one discovers that **female students find the educational institution more interesting than male students** for **94.1% of female students** strongly agree or simply agree that life at school is very interesting, while **90.2% of male students** strongly agree or just agree with the statement. The reverse is also true because **more male students strongly disagree or disagree that life at school is interesting** (7.0%), whilst **female students' percentage is less than half that of male learners** (3.4%). Furthermore male students were more indecisive (3.8%) about that question than female students (2.5%).

The **Kruskal-Wallis test on the aforementioned item by Regions** (Table 5.17) suggests that the **difference between the 5 regions is statistically**

Table 5.16 — Item 30: Life at School is Very Interesting / Frequency and Percentage Counts & Mann-Whitney U test on Q30 by Sex

Freq. & Perc. Counts			Male	Female	U value	Prob. Val.
Value	Freq.	%	M. R.	M.R		
1	53	3.0				
2	35	2.0				
3	58	3.2				
4	451	25.2	833.11	892.53	296888.0	0.0055
5	1108	62.0				
M.C.	83	4.6				
Total	1788	100.0				

Table 5.17 — Item 30: Life at School Is Very Interesting / Kruskal-Wallis test: Q30 by Regions

Regions	Mean Rank	Rank Order	Prob. Val.	Chi Square
One	798.78	4		
Two	875.14	3		
Three	931.26	1	0.0001	24.0521
Four	879.43	2		
Five	790.20	5		

significant (P = 0.0001). From the results that were obtained **Region Three is ranked 1st** with a mean rank of 931.26 whilst **Region Five is ranked 5th** with a much lower mean rank of 790.20. The crosstabulation reveals that there are more students in Region Three who strongly agree with the statement (Life at school is very interesting) than in any of the four other regions (74.9%); in Region 5 that percentage is 58.0% (the lowest of the sample). Another point that

the crosstabulation reveals is the fact that Region Three registered the lowest percentage in terms of students who strongly disagree with the statement (2.3%) and Region 5 the highest (4%).

The next table (Table 5.18) gives a full range of frequency, percentage counts alongside Mann-Whitney U test of item 32 (**I Find School Boring**) by sex. Before proceeding, we should point out that item 32 is the 'negatively worded' counterpart of item 30. First, it should be said that about **2/3 of the students (68.3%) strongly disagree or disagree with the fact that school is boring.** The figure of those who **strongly agree or simply agree that school is boring amounts to 12.0%.** Finally the percentage counts show that 14.8% of students did not make up their minds.

As for the Mann-Whitney U test, it suggests that **the difference between the responses of male students and female students is statistically significant ($P < 0.05$).** An examination of the crosstabulation shows that the figure representing female students who strongly disagree or just disagree with finding school boring is much higher than that of male students (75.9% and 69.9%, respectively). Conversely, the percentage of female students who strongly agree or agree with finding school boring is lower (10.5%) than that of male students. In sum it can be concluded that, **male students find school more boring than female students.**

Another statistical test applied to item 32 is the Kruskal-Wallis test (Table 5.19) which indicates high statistically significant ($P = 0.0000$) differences between the 5 Regions. The table also tells us that Region 4 is ranked 1st with a Mean Rank of 903.31 and that Region Two is ranked 5th with the lowest Mean Rank

Table 5.18 — Item 32: I Find School Boring / Frequency and Percentage Counts & Mann-Whitney U test on Q32 by Sex

Freq. & Perc. Counts			Male	Female	U value	Prob. Val.
Value	Freq.	%	M. R.	M.R		
1	827	46.3				
2	393	22.0				
3	264	14.8				
4	127	7.1	866.91	811.74	295193.5	0.0197
5	87	4.9				
M.C.	90	5.0				
Total	1788	100.0				

Table 5.19 — Item 32: I Find School Boring / Kruskal-Wallis test: Q32 by Regions

Regions	Mean Rank	Rank Order	Prob. Val.	Chi Square
One	878.15	3		
Two	756.17	5		
Three	874.46	4	0.0000	32.0663
Four	903.31	1		
Five	874.23	2		

(756.17). These results suggest that **students in Region Two agree more than in any region that school is not boring** whilst those who **disagree the most with that statement are students from Region Four.** A glance at the crosstabulation table confirms that 79.9% of the students from Region Two strongly disagree or disagree with finding school to be boring, whilst this rate falls *decrecendo* to 76.7%, then 70.3%, 66.4% and finally 65.6%.

5.4.3.3 Students' Desire to Attend School

Respondents were asked to express their view as to **whether they wish to further their studies at the University or not.** Table 5.20 which combines frequency and percentage counts and the Mann-Whitney U test reveals what follows: **more than 4/5 of the entire sample (81.7%) strongly agree or agree with wishing to further their studies at the university.** For those **who strongly oppose or just disagree with the statement their figure is relatively low (7.2%).** The last percentage to mention is that of the indecisive students which amounts to 7.4%.

The probability value shown on the same table indicates that the **difference between male and female students' responses is not significant (P > 0.05).**

Table 5.20 — Item 25: I Strongly Wish to Further My Studies at the University / Frequency and Percentage Counts & Mann-Whitney U test: Q25 by Sex

Freq. & Perc. Counts			Male	Female	U value	Prob. Val.
Value	Freq.	%	M. R.	M.R		
1	77	4.3				
2	52	2.9				
3	133	7.4				
4	278	15.5	864.74	856.38	323666.0	0.6896
5	1184	66.2				
M.C.	64	3.6				
Total	1788	100.0				

Table 5.21 — Item 25 I Strongly Wish to Further My Studies at the University / Mann-Whitney test by Residence; Q25 by School Status & Education Level

Variables	M. R	U. Value	P. Value
Urban	857.19		
Rural	883.41	231596.0	0.2815
Private	899.62		
State	856.77	162080.5	0.1402
1st Cycle	881.45		
2nd Cycle	833.12	334363.0	0.0163

The Mann-Whitney U test (Table 5.21) of the same item (**I Strongly Wish to Further My studies at the University**) by residence (rural/urban), by nature of school (private/state) and by education level shows that: 1) the difference between the responses of urban and rural students was not significant (P = 0.2815); 2) the difference between the responses of private and state schools was not significant either; 3) finally, the difference between the responses of first and second cycle students is significant (P = 0.0163).

As for the Kruskal-Wallis test (Table 5.22), it reveals that the differences between the responses of the students are statistically significant, according to the 5 regions (P = 0.0002). Consequently, Region Four has been ranked first (933.62) while Region One has been ranked fifth. This significant result is translated into the fact that not only does Region Four have a high percentage of students who strongly agree or just agree with the statement (89.4%). As for Region One, ranked fifth, it has the lowest percentage of students who strongly agree or agree with the statement (80.3%).

Table 5.22 — Item 25: I Strongly Wish to Further My Studies at the University / Kruskal-Wallis test: Q25 by Regions

Regions	Mean Rank	Rank Order	Prob. Val.	Chi Square
One	813.24	5		
Two	841.62	3		
Three	915.38	2	0.0002	21.8497
Four	933.62	1		
Five	825.92	3		

Table 5.23 exhibits not only the frequency and percentage counts, but also the Mann-Whitney U test of item 27, i.e **I Wish I Could Quit School** by sex. This table shows that **a bit more than 4/5 of the students** (82.3%), irrespective of sex, residence, nature of school, or education level, **do not wish to quit school.** Regarding the students who wish to quit school, their figure is as low as 5.3%. We can then infer that **students by and large would not like to quit school.** Another category of learners to mention is that of undecided students, a figure which amounts to 7.7%.

The Mann-Whitney test results (on the same table) indicates that the difference between male and female students is statistically significant ($P < 0.05$). According to the crosstabulation table, **the number of students who strongly disagree or disagree with wishing to quit school is higher for female students (90.1%) than for male students (85.5%).** However, female students slightly tend to agree more with the statement (5.6%) than male students (5.1%). In sum, one can then draw the conclusion that **female students oppose quitting school more than male students.** Finally, it should be mentioned that female students are less hesitant (4.3%) on the issue than male students (9.4%).

Table 5.23 — Item 27: I Wish I Could Quit School / Frequency and Percentage Counts & Mann-Whitney U test: Q27 by Sex

	Freq. & Perc. Counts		Male	Female	U value	Prob. Val.
Value	Freq.	%	M. R.	M.R		
1	1117	62.5				
2	354	19.8				
3	131	7.7				
4	49	2.9	862.36	810.83	295209.5	0.0151
5	40	2.4				
M.C.	97	5.4				
Total	1788	100.0				

Table 5.24 — Item 27 I Wish I Could Quit School / Mann-Whitney test by Residence; Q27 by School Status & by Education Level

Variables	M. R	U, Value	P. Value
Urban	815.92		
Rural	965.47	189036.0	0.0000
Private	834.27		
State	847.72	157999.0	0.6500
1st Cycle	860.13		
2nd Cycle	824.46	327603.5	0.0795

It is useful to comment on students' motivational orientation before closing this part of the study. As a matter of fact, the frequency and percentage counts (cf Appendix E) give the following results:

(a) The statement *I am at school because it is compulsory* is ranked 4th by 63.1%

Table 5.25 — Item 27: I Wish I Could Quit School / Kruskal-Wallis test: Q27 by Region

Regions	Mean Rank	Rank Order	Prob. Val.	Chi Square
One	935.39	1		
Two	773.38	5		
Three	886.35	2	0.0000	24.0521
Four	850.77	4		
Five	872.75	3		

of the students, while 9.1% ranked it 1st.

(b) The next item *I am at school because I will end up with a good job* is ranked 1st by 41.8%, 2nd by 22.4%, 3rd by 21.8% and 4th by only 4.1%

(c) The third statement, i.e *I am at school because I would like to become an educated person* is ranked 1st by 23.1%, 2nd by 35.3%, 3rd by 23.0%, 4th by only 8.0%.

(d) The last statement on the questionnaire, *I am at school because I would like to better understand the world which surrounds us* is ranked 1st by 18.2%, 2nd by 26.8%, 3rd by 35.7% and 4th by 8.4%.

(e) Students were given the possibility to add a 5th reason and classify it. The most frequently used reasons are in connection with *helping parents* or *contributing to the development of the country.* This 5th reason as to why students are attending school is ranked 1st by less than 2% of the students.

5.4.3.4 Summary Relating to Area I

At this stage it can be concluded that the results suggest that (1) the vast

majority of the Nigérien students do like school, (2) female students enjoy school more than male students, (3) more strikingly, rural students like school more than urban students, (4) private school students agree with liking school more than state schools, (5) school liking varies from one Region to another. Another interesting result is that the vast majority of students would like to further their studies and that this desire varies according to the nature of the school and to regions. Finally, there is a lot of consistency in the negative and positive formulations of the same points.

5.4.4 Area of Education II: Students' Perception of the Curriculum

Before engaging in any further data analysis, we pause at this stage to point out that because of time restrictiction and academic constraints it is not feasible to analyse all the data in connection with the curriculum. Hence, we have limited this part of the study to one subject *per* major areas of the curriculum – Languages, Humanities, Mathematics and Science – except for Humanities where History and Geography cannot be disassociated. Thus the subjects under study are:

(1) Amongst the languages taught in secondary schools, two are discussed: English which is at the centre of the study and French which is not only the official language and medium of instruction in Niger, but also a subject sensed by intellectuals (rightly or wrongly) to be amongst the culprits impeding the learning process at an early stage as expressed by Dr Siddo Issa senior lecturer at the University of Niamey:

> **Ceci démontre à l'évidence que l'utilisation exclusive du français dès la scolarisation crée un choc brutal, une rupture entre l'enfant et son environnement linguistique et culturel et aboutit à l'inhibition et à la dépersonnalisation (Siddo 1976:238).**

This view is also supported by the National Committee for Educational Re-

form which goes even further to state that if the rate of failure is high it is mostly because the medium of instruction is a foreign language. These lines, which are excerpts of the one of the reports of the committee (Réforme de l'Enseignement 1975:1), encapsulate such viewpoint:

> Sur le plan psychologique la scolarisation dans une langue étrangère, en l'occurrence le français, soumet l'enfant à un déséquilibre dont l'impact sur son développement n'est plus à démontrer: blocages psychologiques, inadaptations sociales, échecs scolaires, aliénation culturelle.

(2) In secondary education three subjects are classified as being part of humanities: History, Geography and Philosophy. Because the latter is taught at a very late stage of secondary education and thus concerns a small number of our sample, we have found it justified to analyse only the data relating to History and Geography, which are taught from *sixième* to *terminale.*

(3) Mathematics is dealt with in this section of the study because it is also taught at all levels of secondary schools; furthermore, the future of those wishing to embark on scientific or technological studies hinges on success in this subject.

(4) Finally, Biology has been chosen instead of Physics and Chemistry, because the first is studied throughout the schooling system.

5.4.4.1 Languages: English and French

a) English

Respondents were asked to express their view concerning the importance of the subjects they were taught at school. Table 5.26 indicates that **more than half of the students view English as a very important subject** (52.6%), and if the results from cells 7 (`Very Important`) and 6 (`important`) are aggregated, we can then say that **3/4 (77.3%) of the total sample consider English to be an**

important subject. Another group of students are those who consider English to be a fairly important subject; they alone are more numerous (10.9%) than those who view English as a subject of little or no importance, or as a useless subject (8.1% for the 3 categories). As for the number of undecided students it is very low (0.7%). It should also be mentioned that about 1/6 of the students **(16.3%) consider English to be their favourite subject, a statistical result which puts English in 3rd position amongst the favourite subjects** after Mathematics (30.8%) and French (19.0%) (cf Appendix E).

Finally, the probability value on the same table shows that **the difference between female and male students' responses is not significant.** All these figures taken into account, one can say that **the vast majority of the students consider English to be an important subject.**

Table 5.26 — Item 36 Importance of English: Frequency & Percentage Counts / Mann-Whitney U test: Q36 by Sex

Value	Freq.	%	Male M.R	Female M.R	U Value	P Value
1	12	.7				
2	21	1.2				
3	16	.9				
4	108	6.0	856.16	889.17	318544.0	0.1549
5	194	10.9				
6	442	24.7				
7	941	52.6				
M. C	54	3.0				
Total	1788	100.0				

Students were also requested to express their views as regards not only their English textbooks but also their teachers of English. Thus table 5.27, which deals with students' perceptions of their English textbooks and of their English teachers, shows that **more than half of the students (51.0%)** consider their English textbooks to be either **excellent** or **very good.** Moreover, more than half of the remaining students (37.4%) have rated their English books to be either of average standard or of fairly good standard or good standard. If we take into account the 2 groups, it can be said that the *vast majority of the students (88.4 %) are satisfied with their English textbooks.* **Only a small minority (1.2%) think that their English textbooks are useless,** while those whose perceptions are less negative, yet not good enough to be on the credit side, are 3.3% of the whole sample. **It can be said then that generally speaking students have a positive view of their English textbooks.** This view is also shared by the *Comité du Livre* – a national committee in charge of assessing teaching materials- which as a conclusion to the evaluation of the 6e and 5e textbooks *English for French Speaking Africa* (Mills series) wrote:

> Ces livres respectent surtout les orientations pédagogiques des programmes. Le manuel de 5e propose une ouverture sur des disciplines telles que la géographie, l'histoire et un peu sur les sciences. Il permet à l'élève de parler d'événements, d'objets, de personnes (familiers ou étrangers) en utilisant des phrases simples ou complexes. Il peut par ailleurs parler des thèmes bien connus dans un anglais simple et correct....(Le Comité du Livre 1989:54-55).

Table 5.27 also indicates that **more than half of the students (65.3%)** view their English teachers as either **excellent,** or **very good** or **good teachers.** If we consider only those who view their English teacher as fairly good or average teachers the number is much higher (20.5%) than those who negatively view their English teachers (7.3%). **The conclusion that can be drawn from these figures is that, the vast majority of students positively view their teachers**

Table 5.27 — Items 54 & 66 : Students Perceptions of Their English Textbooks and Teachers / Frequency and Percentage Counts

(Table 27)

Appreciation	English Textbooks		Teachers of English	
Value	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.
1	11	.6	10	.6
2	22	1.2	72	4.0
3	14	.8	22	1.2
4	45	2.5	37	2.1
5	158	8.8	172	9.6
6	217	12.1	194	10.3
7	295	16.5	300	16.8
8	370	20.7	335	18.7
9	541	30.3	533	29.8
Missing	115	6.4	113	6.3
Total	1788	100.0	1788	100.0

of English.

b) French

The next table (5.28) exhibits the frequency and percentage counts as well as the Mann-Whitney test of item 39 by sex. It reveals that **the vast majority of students find French to be either a very important or important subject (84.7%)**; the same table also shows that the number of students who think that French is a fairly important subject is much higher (6.8%) than that of the students who think that it is either a useless subject, or a subject with no importance, or a subject with little importance (4.6%).

Furthermore, the Mann-Whiteney U test indicates that **the difference between**

male and female students' responses is statistically significant (P > 0.05). This result is due to the fact that the number of students who consider French to be **a very important** or **an important subject** is higher for female students (90.3%) than for male students (86.2%). Furthermore, almost 1/5 of the students (19%) chose French as the subject they like most, **which gives French the 2nd position amongst subjects students enjoy best.**

Table 5.28 — Item 39 Importance of French: Frequency & Percentage Counts / Mann-Whitney U test: Q39 by Sex

Value	Freq.	%	Male M.R	Female M.R	U Value	P Value
1	11	.6				
2	15	.8				
3	14	.8				
4	54	3.0	842.00	911.89	303341.0	0.0008
5	122	6.8				
6	318	17.8				
7	1196	66.9				
M. C	58	3.2				
Total	1788	100.0				

As regards the French reading books students use at school, **less than half of the students consider (49.1%) them to be excellent or very good.** To those who value highly French reading books, we may add another group of students (36.0%) who think that the textbooks in question are either good, fairly good or of average standard. **If we consider these two groups, we can then say that the majority of students (85.1%) are satisfied with their French reading books.** The students who are not happy with their textbooks are very

few, a figure as low as 2.5%.

The same table indicates that the number of students who view their French teachers as excellent, very good or good is much higher than half of the entire sample (67.1%). The second group of students view their French teachers as good or average teachers is about 4 times higher (26.5%) than those who negatively view their French teachers (6.7%). **In sum, it may be said that the vast majority of students view their French teachers as good teachers.**

Table 5.29 — Items 56 & 71 : Students' Perceptions of Their French Reading Textbooks and Teachers / Frequency and Percentage Counts

(Table 29)

Appreciation	French Textbooks		Teachers of French	
Value	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.
1	18	1.0	16	.9
2	8	.4	49	2.7
3	12	.7	28	1.6
4	25	1.4	43	2.4
5	88	4.9	156	8.7
6	206	11.5	174	9.7
7	351	19.6	301	16.8
8	404	22.6	406	22.7
9	473	26.5	493	27.6
Missing	203	11.4	122	6.8
Total	1788	100.0	1788	100.0

5.4.4.2 Humanities: Geography and History

a) Geography

Before discussing the statistical results relating to Geography and History, it should be noted that they are two distinct components of the curriculum, though taught by the same teacher in most cases. Having said this, we continue the analysis by pointing out that table 30 reveals the following details: the vast majority of students **(84.7%) consider Geography to be a very important or important subject**; 6.8% of the students find Geography to a fairly important subject. On the debit side is found a not negligeable number of students who think that Geography is a subject with either no importance at all, or no importance, or of little importance (10.2%). For English and French the figure is 8.1% and 4.6%, respectively. **It should be added that only 17 students (1.%) chose Geography as the subject they like best. In terms of ranking, it occupies the 9th position.**

As for the Mann-Whitney U test, it shows no significant difference between male and female students ($P > 0.05$).

Table 5.30 — Item 40 Importance of Geography: Frequency & Percentage Counts / Mann-Whitney U test: Q40 by Sex

Value	Freq.	%	Male M.R	Female M.R	U Value	P Value
1	11	.6				
2	15	.8				
3	18	1.0				
4	151	8.4	861.03	874.64	324819.0	0.5626
5	122	6.8				
6	318	17.8				
7	1196	66.9				
M. C	58	3.2				
Total	1788	100.0				

Table 5.31 which represents students' perceptions of their Geography textbooks and teachers, indicates that the students who view their textbooks as excellent or very good teaching materials do not make half of the sample (35.2%). However, more than half of the remaining students consider their geography textbooks to be either good, or fairly good or average (51.8%). As for those who negatively view their textbooks they constitute only 5.9 % of the entire sample. Again, a relatively low number of students consider their Geography and History teachers to be either excellent or very good or good teachers (59.8%). The figure for English and French is 65.3% and 67.1%, respectively. Another category to mention is that of the students who view their teachers as fairly good or average. They alone are more numerous (23.5%) than those who are not happy with their Geography and History teachers (8.7% of the sample).

b) History

The next table exhibits not only the frequency and percentage counts of students view of History but also the Mann-Whitney U test to find out whether the difference between the answers of male or female students is significant or not. Thus, it can be said that the majority of the students find History to be a very important or important subject (71.0%), whilst 13.7% view it as a fairly important subject. It should be noted in passing, that the number of students who think that Geography is a very important or important subject is as high as that of the students who find History to be either very important or important or fairly important, i.e 84.7%. **These results enable us to say that students find Geography more important than History.**

As for the probability value shown in table 5.32 it reveals that the difference between male and female students' responses is not significant ($P > 0.05$). Referring

Table 5.31 — Items 59 & 72 : Students' Perceptions of Their Geography Textbooks and Teachers / Frequency and Percentage Counts

Appreciation	Geography Textbooks		Teachers of Hist/Geog.	
Value	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.
1	16	.9	13	.7
2	28	1.6	67	3.7
3	30	1.7	32	1.8
4	46	2.6	57	3.2
5	207	11.6	183	10.2
6	307	17.2	238	13.3
7	411	23.0	317	17.7
8	377	21.1	364	20.4
9	253	14.1	388	21.7
Missing	113	6.3	129	7.2
Total	1788	100.0	1788	100.0

to table 5.33, we find out that the number of students who view their History books as **excellent** or **very good** is well below 50.0%, i.e 34.8%; (for Geography that figure is 35.2%). Less than half of the remaining students (46.1%) find their History books either **good**, **fairly good** or **average**; again, this figure is higher for geography books (51.8%). Regarding those who are not happy with their History books they are more numerous (8.8%) than those who are not happy with their geography books (5.9%) **From what has been said so far, we can deduct that generally speaking students are more happy with their Geography books than they are with their History books.** As for the Comité du Livre, these are some of the comments it made about some Geography books used at the C.E.G level:

[Concernant le livre Thèmes et documents de Géographie (6e),] les thèmes de ce manuel recoupent plus ou moins le contenu de notre programme bien que le programme est plutôt centré sur le milieu nigérien. Le contenu du manuel correspond peu aux buts assignés à l'enseignement de la discipline...(Comité du Livre 1989:36)

[Quant au livre Thèmes et documents de Géographie (5e),] il recouvre exactement nos programmes, les thèmes traités présentant les mêmes découpages. A le voir ce document a servi au moment de la préparation de nos programmes. Les buts ne sont pas précisés de manière explicite.....Même la manière d'observer, de comparer est très passive. Il peut être utilisé en attendant la rédaction d' un nouveau manuel. (Comité du Livre *ibid.:40*).

As already stated in chapter three, Geography and History syllabi like most components of the curriculum start by helping the student discover himself/herself, understand the history of his/her country, know very well his/her environment in order to be better equipped to improve it. Students in general enjoy learning about themselves and their country, and books dealing with their history and geography are thus welcome in spite of the pedagogical mishaps they may contain – as the above two quotations demonstrate.

Table 5.32 — Item 41 Importance of History: Frequency & Percentage Counts / Mann-Whitney U test: Q41 by Sex

Value	Freq.	%	Male M.R	Female M.R	U Value	P Value
1	13	.7				
2	19	1.1				
3	23	1.3				
4	159	8.9	852.82	888.36	315888.5	0.1416
5	245	13.7				
6	587	32.8				
7	683	38.2				
M. C	59	3.3				
Total	1788	100.0				

Table 5.33 — Items 58 & 72 : Students' Perceptions of Their History Textbooks and Teachers / Frequency and Percentage Counts

(Table 29)

Appreciation	History Textbooks		Teachers of Hist/Geog.	
Value	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.
1	48	2.7	13	.7
2	68	3.8	67	3.7
3	24	1.3	32	1.8
4	66	3.7	57	3.2
5	206	11.5	183	10.2
6	272	15.2	238	13.3
7	346	19.4	317	17.7
8	353	19.7	364	20.4
9	270	15.1	388	21.7
Missing	135	7.6	129	7.2
Total	1788	100.0	1788	100.0

5.4.4.3 Mathematics

Table 5.34 which is the frequency and percentage counts and the Mann-Whitney U test of item 42 by sex reveals that the vast majority of students (78.4%) consider mathematics to be a **very important** or **important** subject. If we add to this category those who view Mathematics as a **fairly important** subject, we can then say that 85.8% of the students find mathematics to be an important subject. Altogether 9.6% of the sample do not regard Mathematics to be an important subject. Though the result is statistically significant (P= 0.0296), there is not much difference between the responses of male and female students. Thus the crosstabulation show that 88.4% of male students and 88.9% of female students consider mathematics to be an important subject, while 3.7% of the male students

and 4.2% of the female students think that it is not important. We can thus say that **Mathematics is viewed as an important subject by the vast majority of students, that more female students consider it to be a subject of no importance than male students.**

Table 5.34 — Item 42 Importance of Mathematics: Frequency & Percentage Counts / Mann-Whitney U test: Q42 by Sex

Value	Freq.	%	Male M.R	Female M.R	U Value	P Value
1	27	1.5				
2	53	3.0				
3	14	.8				
4	104	5.8	881.61	835.61	313295.5	0.0296
5	133	7.4				
6	224	12.5				
7	1178	65.9				
M. C	55	3.1				
Total	1788	100.0				

As with the previous subjects, students were asked to give their opinions about the mathematics books and teachers. From the figures in table 5.35, it can be said that more than half of the student (55.2%) value their books highly value their books highly, while 29.8% of the remaining students have rated their books as either **good**, **fairly good**, or **average**. All these results taken into account, it can be concluded that, the vast majority of the students have a good appreciation of their Mathematics books.

The Comité du Livre assessed the most widely used 6e and 5e Mathematics books in Niger, i.e *I.R.E.M Dakar*, came to the conclusion that this series is not only 15

years old – thus outdated, but also should no more be ordered by the Ministry of Education (Comité du Livre 1989:11). Another series of Mathematics books assessed by the same committee is the collection *I.R.M.A Abidjan*. The Comité du Livre unanimously agree that 'from all perspectives, the latter is better than the former, but seems difficult to be exploited by the students, which means that problems still subsist'.

The same table also indicates that a rather more than half of the Mathematics teachers (51.9%) have been rated as **excellent** or **very good** teachers. Altogether, 83.2% of the students are satisfied with their Mathematics teachers, while 10.2% are not happy with them.

Table 5.35 — Items 60 & 73 : Students' Perceptions of Their Mathematics Books and Teachers / Frequency and Percentage Counts

(Table 29)

Appreciation	Maths Textbooks		Teachers of Maths	
Value	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.
1	24	1.3	18	1.0
2	80	4.5	100	5.6
3	21	1.2	34	1.9
4	58	3.2	49	2.7
5	175	9.8	158	8.8
6	150	8.4	162	9.1
7	207	11.6	239	13.4
8	323	18.1	314	17.6
9	663	37.1	613	34.3
Missing	87	4.9	101	5.6
Total	1788	100.0	1788	100.0

5.4.4.4 Sciences: Biology

The penultimate table (5.36) to discuss in this section is that relating to Biology. According to the frequency and percentage counts on this table the vast majority of the students (81.1%) consider Biology to be a **very important** or an **important suject**. If we take into account those who view the subject as **relatively important**, it can be said that almost 90% of the students regard Biology as an important subject. Those who think the opposite constitute only 5.8%. **This result suggests that there are more students who agree with the importance of Biology than there are who agree with the importance of any other subject.**

The same table exhibits the probability value which indicates that the difference between male and female students is statistically significant (P = 0.0121). However, the crosstabulation reveals no significant difference for 93.3% of the male students view Biology as an important subject, compared to (92.3%) for female students. Similarly there are more female students (6.6%) who negatively view the subject than male students (5.8%).

Finally, table 5.37 which deals with students perceptions of their Biology books and teachers shows that more than 3/5 of the students (66.2%) have rated these books as either **excellent** or **very good** or **good**, while 15.1% consider them to be either **fairly good** or just **average**. Generally speaking, the majority of the students are pleased with their Biology manuals. The National Evaluation Committee corroborates these results by grading one of the books 15,52 points out of 20 and the second one 16,04 out of 20. The marking criteria were: (1) internal and external aspects of the book, (2) content, (3) didactic and pedagogical aspects, and (4) facilitators, as shown below:

Table 5.36 — Item 43 Importance of Biology: Frequency & Percentage Counts / Mann-Whitney U test: Q43 by Sex

Value	Freq.	%	Male M.R	Female M.R	U Value	P Value
1	16	.9				
2	20	1.1				
3	18	1.0				
4	66	3.7	870.44	816.58	298122.5	0.0121
5	136	7.6				
6	332	18.6				
7	1118	62.5				
M. C	82	4.6				
Total	1788	100.0				

Biologie (1979) Edition Afrique NEA Bordas (6e) by R. Djakou: (1) Présentation matérielle: 28/30; (2) Contenu: 66/81; (3) Aspects didactiques et pédagogiques: 36/54; (4) Facilitateurs: 16/27, soit une moyenne générale de 15,52/20 (Le Comité du Livre *ibid.*:18-19)

Biologie du Sahel à la Forêt (1982) Edition Hatier (5e) by Odile Gérenton: (1) Présentation matérielle: 27/30; (2) Contenu: 63/81; (3) Aspects didactiques et pédagogiques: 46/54; (4) Facilitateurs: 18/27, soit une moyenne générale de 16,04/20 (Le Comité du Livre *ibid.*:22-3)

As for the teachers of this subject, the majority of the learners (60.0%) view them as either **excellent** or **very good** or **good** teachers. The aggregate of cells 9, 8, 7, 6 and 5 indicates that the vast majority of students are happy with their Biology teachers.

The responses from the teacher questionnaire also show that in general teachers are satisfied with their textbooks. Thus, the majority of the teachers (72.3%) consider their teaching materials to be either excellent, very good, good or fairly good. Only 7.6 % of them are not happy with the books they use.

Students carrying out an experiment

The library of Lycée Mariama

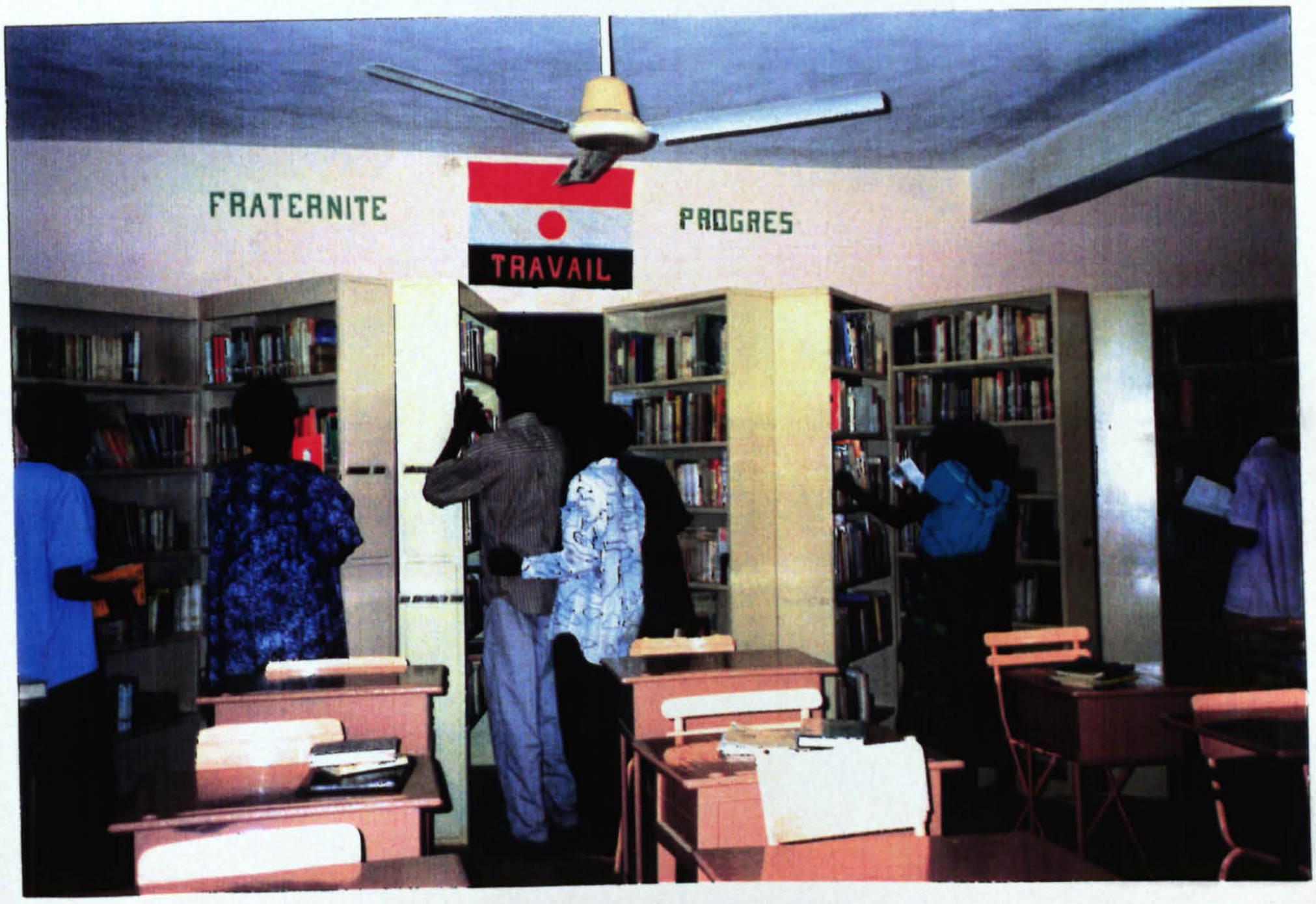


Table 5.37 — Items 61 & 74: Students' Perceptions of Their Biology Books and Teachers / Frequency and Percentage Counts

Appreciation	Nat. Sc. Textbooks		Teachers of Nat. Sc.	
Value	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.
1	46	2.6	58	3.2
2	56	3.1	55	3.1
3	26	1.5	17	1.0
4	35	2.0	20	1.1
5	115	6.4	114	6.4
6	156	8.7	177	9.9
7	247	13.8	268	15.0
8	382	21.4	372	20.8
9	554	31.0	522	29.2
Missing	171	9.6	185	10.3
Total	1788	100.0	1788	100.0

As regards the interviews, the common denominators they share deal with (a) the scarcity of teaching materials, especially in the field of science, (b) the fact that generally speaking books were not piloted and assessed before they were put in the hands of teachers and students, and (c) the inadequacy of the books, as pointed out by the following respondents:

> Les manuels scolaires sont d'abord inaccessibles. Aucun manuel n'a vraiment fait l'objet d'un test ou d'une évaluation spécifique sur le terrain nigérien. On les adopte sur la base d'une évaluation réalisée dans d'autres pays: République de Côte d'Ivoire, France, Sénégal, etc. (Interview transcript No. 9).

> En effet, deux problèmes se posent. Une insuffisance quantitative et une insuffisance qualitative. Pour l'insuffisance quantitative, il n'est pas rare de trouver, selon les disciplines un livre pour deux, trois et même quatre élèves. Pour ce qui est de l'insuffisance qualitative, nous dirons tout simplement que les manuels ne sont pas adaptés (Interview transcript No. 3).

With regard to the lack of 'adaptation' of the books and programmes to the

realities of the Nigérien students, one respondent pointed out that this does not apply to all the subjects, that the problem lies at the level of the teachers rather than with the textbooks or the programmes. He supported his view by arguing that in Mathematics, for instance, the right angle is right in Paris, it is right in London, it is right in Niamey, which indeed is a comment to bear in mind. The same applies to physics and other scientific subjects as they are everywhere based on the same notions. These are his actual words that our translation should not betray:

> Les programmes, vous savez bien que nous avons des programmes renovés, mais qui ne sont pas mis en application. Les anciens programmes sont là. Je ne suis pas certain quand on dit que les programmes sont inadaptés, il faut plutôt voir les enseignants qui sont appelés à enseigner ces programmes-là. Le programme au fait, si vous prenez le programme de Mathématiques, par exemple, l'angle droit est droit à Paris, il est droit à Londres, il est droit à Niamey. Et la Physique est la même. Les programmes scientifiques sont les mêmes (Interview transcript No. 1).

5.4.4.5 Summary for Education Area II

Students' perceptions and attitudes towards the components of the curriculum so far discussed (English, French, History and Geography, Mathematics, and Sciences) are broadly speaking positive. The number of students who consider Mathematics and Sciences to be important subjects is higher for male students than female. Finally, the subject students view as the most important is Biology.

5.5 Education Area III: Parental Encouragement

As table 5.38 shows, the vast majority of the students (85.8%) agree that their parents often point out the importance of school to them, while it is not the case with 7.2% of the students. Furthermore, the following table 5.39 indicates 86.9% agree that their parents do advise them to ask questions when they do not grasp passages of lessons, compared to 6.3% who disagree with the statement. Generally

speaking, students think that the majority of parents encourage their children in one way or another.

Table 5.38 — Item 15: My Parents Often Point Out the Importance of School to Me / Frequency & Percentage Counts

Value	Freq.	Perc.
1	65	3.6
2	64	3.6
3	74	4.1
4	565	31.6
5	969	54.2
Missing	51	2.9
Total	1788	100.0

Table 5.39 — Item 21: My Parents Advise Me to Ask the Teacher Questions Whenever I don't Understand a Passage / Frequency & Percentage Counts

Value	Freq.	Perc.
1	59	3.3
2	53	3.0
3	80	4.5
4	440	24.6
5	1114	62.3
Missing	42	2.3
Total	1788	100.0

The previous results are at variance with the teachers'. In effect, as table

5.40 indicates, about only 1/3 of the teachers (34.6%) strongly agree or agree that students get some parental encouragement whereas the majority (43.3) disagree that is the case.

When asked if most of the pupils' parents regularly enquire about their children's progress, the vast majority of the teachers (90.9%) answered negatively, while a very small number (4.5%) agreed, as shown in table 5.41.

Table 5.40 — Item 28: Generally Speaking Parents Encourage Their Children to Work Hard at School / Frequency & Percentage Counts

Value	Freq.	Perc.
1	20	15.0
2	38	28.6
3	22	16.5
4	38	28.6
5	8	6.0
Missing	7	5.3
Total	133	100.0

Similarly, as table 5.42 reveals, the vast majority of the teachers (96.3%) think that generally speaking, parents do not know much about their children's school achievements. It is worth reporting that none of the teachers agreed with the statement, or remained undecided.

With regard to the interviews they reveal that most of the interviewees agree on one fact: parents do not regularly visit the educational institution to enquire about their children's studies. The following lines illustrate that general view:

> [1] Pour cette question, je dirai qu'en général la situation reste handicappante pour le suivi des études de leurs enfants. En effet, n'oublions pas que dans notre pays le taux d'analphabétisme est de 86%. Ce qui fait qu'en général il y a une

Table 5.41 — Item 29: Most of the Parents Come Regularly to School to Enquire About their Children's Progress / Frequency & Percentage Counts

Value	Freq.	Perc.
1	70	52.6
2	51	38.3
3	3	2.3
4	4	3.0
5	2	1.5
Missing	3	2.3
Total	133	100.0

Table 5.42 — Item 71: Parents in General Know About Their Children's Achievements / Frequency &Percentage Counts

Value	Freq.	Perc.
1	7	5.3
2	121	91.0
3	0	0.0
4	0	0.0
5	0	0.0
Missing	5	3.7
Total	133	100.0

volonté qui se manifeste pour le suivi des études des enfants par les parents; mais malheureusement, cette situation d'analphabétisme fait qu'en général une minorité s'occupe du suivi....(Interview transcript No. 3).

The passage below is an excerpt from the interview held with the Principal of one of the Lycées in Niamey. He in substance points out that (1) the majority of

parents are illiterate, hence are not equipped to follow the studies of their children (2) at the end of each term students take exams, teachers correct them, fill in reports (3) but unfortunately, nobody comes to collect them - which shows the extent to which in general, parents do not take part in the education of their children. However, he confesses that there exist parents who do visit his school to enquire about their children's studies.

> [2] Là aussi, je vais faire la distinction parce que tout le monde n'a pas les moyens de suivre son / ses enfant(s). Certains ne suivent pas les enfants parce que tout simplement (1) l'école ne les intéresse pas ou (2) qu'ils ne savent ni lire ni écrire, et ne peuvent donc rien faire pour leurs enfants – parce qu' ils ne savent exactement pas ce que font leurs enfants. D'autres se désintéressent pour des raisons qui sont assez difficiles à dire; parce que nous qui sommes dans les établissements, nous voyons très bien que nous faisons des bulletins chaque trimestre, mais personne ne vient les chercher; nous les gardons pour nous comme si le travail de l'élève n'intéresse pas son parent. Donc, il y a ceux-là à côté desquels il y a aussi ceux qui s'intéressent véritablement au travail de leurs enfants, qui viennent à l'école voir ce qui se passe, qui, au moindre petit problème s'informent. Parmi ceux qui ont les moyens certains prennent des répétiteurs à la maison pour leurs enfants. Donc, l'attitude là aussi diffère (Interview transcript No. 13).

By way of summary, it can be said that students in general find that their parents encourage them to study, while the vast majority of teachers and of interviewees hold the view that parents do not do much to encourage their children because (1) in general they hardly get in touch with educational establishments to enquire about their children's progress, and (2) for reason related to the illiteracy in Niger, the majority of the parents do not know much about their children's achievements.

5.6 Education Area IV : English Language Teaching in Niger

5.6.1 Students' Perceptions of English

Table 5.43 enables us to check the consistency of the answers provided by the students as regards their liking or disliking of English. Thus, the vast majority (85.3%) agree with enjoying learning English very much, while less than 150 students out of 1788, i.e 7.8% disagree with the statement. Asked whether they hate learning English, as expected, the vast majority (78.2%) disagree with item 89. Furthermore, about the same number of students who do not enjoy learning English, hate learning it (8.8%). These figures reveal that **generally speaking students like English very much.**

Table 5.43 — Item 86: I Enjoy Learning English Very Much & item 89: I Hate Learning English / Frequency and Percentage counts

Variables	I Enjoy Learning English		I Hate Learning English	
Value	Freq.	Perc.	Freq.	Perc.
1	83	4.6	1017	56.9
2	56	3.1	399	22.3
3	69	3.9	132	7.7
4	566	31.7	88	4.9
5	958	53.6	70	3.9
Missing	56	3.1	82	4.6
Total	1788	100.0	1788	100.0

As for table 5.44 which exhibits the Mann-Whitney U test of item 86 by sex, residence, nature of schools and levels, it indicates that the difference between male and female students is significant. The crosstabulation of the same test shows

that the **number of students who strongly agree that learning English is enjoyable is higher for female students (63.4%) than for male students (51.4%).** However, if we combine cells 4 and 5 there is not much difference between the two groups, i.e 88.3 for male students and 87.5% for female students. Conversely, there is not much difference between male and female students in terms of disagreeing with the statement (8.2% for female students and 8.0% for male students).

The results on the aforementioned table and the crosstabulation suggest that **female students are more positive in their answers than male students in terms of learning English.**

Table 5.44 — Item 86: I Enjoy learning English Very Much / Mann-Whitney U test: Q86 by Sex, Residence, Nature of School, and by levels

Variables	Mean Rank	U Value	P
Male	837.13		
Female	925.58	295734.0	0.0001
Urban	901.31		
Rural	731.72	197023.0	0.0000
Private	930.65		
State	856.96	153949.0	0.0214
First Cycle	853.09		
Second Cycle	887.20	343769.0	0.1201

The same table reveals that the difference between the responses provided by the rural and urban students is highly significant (P = 0.0000). Again, reference to the crosstabulation shows that considerably more than 4/5 of the urban students

(90.3%) strongly agree or just agree that learning English is enjoyable. This figure is much lower for rural students (78.9%). As for the students who strongly disagree or just disagree that learning English is enjoyable, their number is much bigger in rural schools (15.5%) than in urban schools (6.1%). **In sum, it can be said that urban students enjoy learning English more than rural students.**

Another result provided by table 5.41 is in connection with the Mann-Whitney U test of the same item in question by nature of school. As a matter of fact, the P. value suggests that the difference between private school and state school students' responses is significant (P = 0.0214). In effect, more than 3/5 of the private school students (64.1%) strongly agree that learning English is enjoyable; in state schools this figure is much lower (54.0%). However, if cells 5 and 4 are aggregated, the difference between the two groups is not that significant (87.4% for private schools and 88.1% for state schools). In addition to these facts, it can be said that there are more students who do not enjoy learning English in private schools (9.4%) than in state schools (7.8%). Though a clear cut conclusion is not easy to find, the results suggest that **private school students seem to agree more positively with the statement than state school students.** Finally, the Mann-Whitney U test on the same table shows no significant difference in terms of the two education levels.

The last table in connection with students' liking of English (table 5.45) shows that statistically, **the difference between students' answers is highly significant according to regions** (P = 0.0000). The crosstabulation indicates that the number of students who agree with enjoying learning English is much greater in Region Two, which is ranked 1st (90.9%) than in Region Three (76.5%) ranked 5th. Conversely, those who do not enjoy learning English are over twice more

Table 5.45 — Item 86: I Enjoy Learning English Very Much / Kruskal-Wallis test: Q86 by Region

Regions	Mean Rank	Rank Order	Prob. Val.	Chi Square
One	798.03	4		
Two	934.94	1		
Three	787.56	5	0.0000	25.0817
Four	880.47	2		
Five	841.63	3		

numerous in Region Three (15.3%) than in Region Two (6.7%).

Table 5.46 shows that considerably more than 3/5 of the students (74.1%) strongly agree or just agree that to succeed in English is very important for them, while about 1/10 of the sample (11.3%) strongly disagree or disagree with the statement. **These raw figures tell us that broadly speaking, students are determined in their learning of English.**

Table 5.46 — Item 92: To Succeed in English Is Very Important For Me / Frequency and Percentage counts

Value	Freq.	Perc.
1	105	5.9
2	99	5.5
3	164	9.2
4	578	32.3
5	747	41.8
Missing	95	5.3
Total	1788	100.0

This determination to succeed in English does not vary according to sex as table 5.47 indicates (P = 0.0511), nor does it vary according to residence (P = 0.0720). However, the difference between students' responses is highly significant according to both the variables, nature of school and levels of education. The crosstabulation suggests that **the determination to succeed in English is more acute in private schools** (where 80.7% strongly agree or just agree with the statement) **than in state schools** (77.9%). Furthermore, both types of schools have just about the same number of students who disagree with the fact that it is important for them to succeed in English (12.3% in private schools and 12.0% in state schools). **The results are also highly significant according to level of education because (a) about one half of the students of the first cycle (50.2%) strongly agree that it is important for them to succeed in English while about 1/3 of the second cycle students (34.6%) strongly agree with the statement,** (b) the aggregation of cells 5 and 4 still show that first cycle students are responding more positively than those of the second cycle (78.9% and 77.2%, respectively). Finally, both cycles have about the same number of students for whom succeeding in English is not a priority (12.3% for the 1st cycle, and 12.0% for the 2nd cycle).

Table 5.48 is the percentage and frequency counts of item 101 which purports to measure students awareness of English use in further education, irrespective of the field they opt for. It shows that considerably more than 3/5 of the students (73.6%) acknowledge that they are studying English because they will need it at the University, while about 1/10 of the students do not go along with the statement.

Table 5.47 — Item 92: To Succeed in English is Very Important For Me / Q86 by Sex, Residence, Nature of School, and by levels

Variables	Mean Rank	U Value	P
Male	831.44		
Female	877.61	297469.5	0.0511
Urban	857.05		
Rural	807.30	217444.0	0.0720
Private	972.51		
State	828.45	133413.0	0.0000
First Cycle	889.31		
Second Cycle	781.44	298093.5	0.0000

Table 5.48 — Item 101: I am Studying English Because I Will Need It at University Level / Percentage & Frequency Counts

Value	Freq.	Perc.
1	86	4.8
2	101	5.6
3	245	13.7
4	497	27.8
5	805	45.8
Missing	54	3.0
Total	1788	100.0

5.6.2 Students' Motivational Orientation

The frequency and percentage table reveals the following results regarding the ranking of 4 reasons for which students may be learning English:

(1) More than one half of the students (52.7%) have ranked 4th – i.e last position- the statement *I am learning English because it is a compulsory subject.* However, a handful of students (14.5%) do agree with the statement and therefore have ranked it 1st.

(2) Only 15.3% of the students classified the statement *I am learning English because I want to know the English society and culture well* as the first reason why they are learning English. More than 1/3 of the students (36.3%) have ranked this statement third.

(3) *Learning English for the sake of communication* is ranked 1st by 30.8% while only a few students do not agree with that view (4.9%) and thus have ranked it 4th (last).

(4) The last statement which is in connection with *learning English for the sake of obtaining a good job in the future* has been ranked 1st by 29.5%, 2nd by 20.7%, 3rd by 20.9%, 4th by 13.9%.

(5) Students were given the opportunity to mention a 5th reason if they found it applicable to them. The common 5th reason provided by students is related to studying in the United States or England. Less than 2% of the students classified this 5th reason as their first motive for learning English.

If we take into account all the statements ranked first, we notice that *Learning English for the sake of communication* has the highest percentage (30.8%), and is thus the most common No. 1 reason for learning English.

Regarding the statements ranked second, again the previous statement gets the highest percentage and may be considered as the most common No. 2 reason for learning English.

The same procedure enables us to say that the statement relating to *learning English for the sake of getting to know about English society and culture* is ranked 3rd, and the one in connection with *learning English because it is a compulsory subject* gets the 4th and 5th positions. As for *learning English for the sake of obtaining a good job* this is ranked 6th. However, if we look at this statement from another angle, i.e the percentage of students who ranked it 1st, 2nd and 3rd (*vide supra*), it may also be argued that it is highly regarded by the students as one of the reasons for which they are learning English. Finally, the 5th possible statement as to why students are learning English has been ranked 7th.

5.6.3 Students' Achievements in English, French and Mathematics

Table 5.49 represents the average mark obtained by students during the first trimester. In each of the subjects, the students had at least 3 tests before the first term exam. The marks they obtain during the exam are multiplied by two and added to the average of the marks obtained for the number of tests during the term; the total is then divided by 3 to obtain the average mark of the term.

Thus the table shows that, in **English more than one half of the students (56.4%) obtained a term average mark which is superior to 12 out of 20.** In French less than 1/3 of the students (29.1%) and in Mathematics about 2/5 of the students (39.3%) obtained term average mark which are above 12 out 20. As for the number of students who would be considered successful by Nigérien standards, we can say that, in **English the vast majority of the students (90.9%) may be considered as successful for having term average grades ranging from +12 to 10 out of 20.** In French and Mathematics it is 79.2% and 61.0% of the students (respectively) who fulfil the requirement. **Clearly, table 5.44 indicates that students' results are much better in English than**

in any of the two major components of the curriculum, i.e French and Mathematics.

Table 5.49 — Item 101: Students' First Term Scores of Achievements English, French and Mathematics / Percentage & Frequency Counts

Scores	English		French		Mathematics	
Scores out of 20	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
More than 12	1008	56.4	520	29.1	702	39.3
Between 12 & 11	264	14.8	353	19.7	203	11.4
Between 11 & 10	173	9.7	310	17.3	185	10.3
Between 10 & 9	113	6.3	235	13.1	236	13.2
Between 9 & 8	66	3.7	125	7.0	121	6.8
Between 8 & 7	37	2.1	84	4.7	113	6.3
Less than 7	43	2.4	58	3.2	114	8.1
Missing	84	4.7	103	5.8	84	4.7
Total	1788	100.0	1788	100.0	1788	100.0

5.6.4 English Awareness and Its Place in the Curriculum

Tables 5.50 and 5.51 purport to show a prognosis of English language from the students' perspective. They were asked to 'assess' the place of English in Niger by comparing it to French, the official language and medium of instruction. Hence, more than half of the students (56.6%) think that **presently** French is more important than English in Niger, while more than one quarter (25.8%) think that **today** French is as important as English. There are students, although they are a minority (11.2%), who believe that **today** French is less important than English. These are indeed very important stances which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Table 5.50 — Item 129: I Think That TODAY In Niger, FRENCH IS ... Frequency & Percentage Counts

Statements	Freq.	Perc.
more important than English	1012	56.6
as important as English	443	25.8
less important than English	200	11.2
Missing	133	7.4
Total	1788	100.0

Regarding the future place of English in Niger a percentage as high as 34.2% think that **English** will be **more important** than French. This figure is three times higher than that representing the view of the students who think that French is presently less important than English (11.2%). Those who think that **English** will be **as important as French** in the future are by far more numerous (40.5%) than those who think that currently the two languages are on the same footing (25.8%). Less than 1/5 of the students (18.1%) view English with a status inferior to that of French.

Teachers, irrespective of the subjects they taught have very positive views about English. In effect, an overwhelming majority (95.3%) strongly disagree or disagree with the statement **teaching English as well as learning it is a waste of time.** More than 4/5 of the teachers (86.4%) strongly agree or just agree with the fact that **any student who would like to further her/his studies will need English.** Other interesting results show that the vast majority of teachers (81.9%) strongly agree or just agree that **students should learn English even if it was not included in the curriculum,** that most of them (90.6%) strongly disagree or just disagree that **studying English**

is a waste of time for the Nigérien. Asked about the relation between the English language and the developing countries, again the vast majority (79.7%) strongly agree or just agree that any developing country needs English to have access to modern technology and to the scientific world. As regards their perception of the place of English in Niger, 77.4% of the teachers think that today English is less important than French in Niger, while 12.1% strongly disagree or just disagree. Finally, it should be said that there are more teachers who do not want to come up with a prognostic (41.4%), while 22.6% think that in the future English will be more important than French; those who hold the opposite view are more numerous (31.6%)

Table 5.51 — Item 130: In Niger, I Think That IN THE FUTURE, ENGLISH WILL BE ... Frequency & Percentage Counts

Statements	Freq.	Perc.
more important than French	612	34.2
as important as French	724	40.5
less important than French	323	18.1
Missing	129	7.2
Total	1788	100.0

All the 14 interviewees unanimously concede that English is an important language, an international language, that it ought to hold a *place de choix* in the curriculum, and that as a tool it not only enables Africans from former French and English colonies to communicate, to understand each other, but above all is viewed as the path leading to modernism, technology and progress. English is seen as a *passage obligatoire* or the language of leadership.

L'enseignement de l'anglais est extrêmement important parce que c'est la langue

la plus parlée au monde et nous sommes une Afrique qui a été colonisée par notamment les puissances coloniales d'origine anglo-saxonne et d'origine latine. Je pense donc que l'enseignement de l'anglais est une nécessité pour la compréhension entre les populations africaines des anciennes colonies anglosaxonnes et celles des anciennes colonies des pays latins. Donc, c'est une nécessité pour se comprendre, pour communiquer entre eux.
Le deuxième point c'est que l'anglais est une langue technique....Ainsi donc la connaissance de l'anglais est une nécessité pour tout homme qui veut vivre la modernité étant donné l'avance des pays anglosaxons dans ce domaine (Interview transcript No. 7).

Mais...(rires) mais l'anglais, c'est une force de frappe sur le plan international. Aujourd'hui, toute la question du développement se pose par rapport à l'efficacité du pays sur la scène internationale, car aucun pays ne peut se développer en s'enfermant sur lui-même. Or l'anglais comme un certain nombre de langues s'impose sur le plan international, et l'on ne peut ignorer la percé faite par l'anglais (Interview transcript No. 2).

He! he! aujourd'hui l'a-n-g-lais est un passage obligatoire. C'est le leadership, vous voyagez, vous quittez Paris pour aller ailleurs, c'est l'anglais. C'est l'anglais, et je crois que son importance n'est plus à démontrer.... Donc aujourd'hui, le français doit avoir à peu près le même nombre d'horaires d'enseignement que l'anglais parce qu'on s'est rendu compte que l'anglais est un passage obligatoire aussi; on ne peut pas évoluer correctement en étant analphabète en anglais. C'est très important l'anglais (Interview transcript No. 1).

It should also be noted at this stage that all respondents showed their surprise when asked if they were in favour of the suppression of English from the curriculum. This attitude was translated in many forms which indeed are inherent to the sociolinguistic background of the interviewees. For instance, some reinforced their opposition through *repetitions* of the opposition words, (e.g 'no, no; it is out of question, it is out of question) or insisted on the word English by making it longer (l' a-n-g-lais) and by repeating the word twice. For most Nigériens this way of communicating is very meaningful for it draws the attention of the interlocutor to the seriousness of the matter under discussion. Other participants when asked about removing English from the curriculum, started laughing before providing the interviewer with an answer – a way of saying 'that's incredible' or 'what's wrong with you'.

Table 5.52 shows that a proportion close to the 3/5 of the students (59.2%) is aware of the international character of English. These almost doubled those who think that French is the most widespred language (30.1%). Only a few students considered Chinese (1.6%), German (.1%), Spanish (.3), or Swahili (.8%) to be the most widely use language.

Table 5.52 — Item 131: I Think That the Most Widely Used Language in the World IS ... /Frequency & Percentage Counts

Languages	Freq.	%
French	538	30.1
Chinese	28	1.6
English	1059	59.2
German	2	.1
Spanish	6	.3
Russian	1	.1
Swahili	15	.8
Other	5	.3

5.6.5 Summary of Education Area IV

The statistical results obtained demonstrate the following trends:

(a) Secondary school students in Niger have a very positive attitude toward learning English; furthermore, this attitude varies according to sex, residence and the nature of schools;

(b) Another positive attitude demonstrated by the students is their determination to learn the language successfully.

(c) This liking for English and determination to succeed in the learning of the

language are translated into the fact that students' achievements in English are much greater than in other major subjects, i.e French and Mathematics.

(d) Nigérien students as well as other people involved in education are fully aware of the importance of English which, in their own terms, occupies *une place de choix.*

5.7 Area of Education V: Innovations in the Curriculum

This section of the work takes on an important part of the empirical study inasmuch as it sets out to reveal the participants' views regarding innovations implemented in the curriculum in general and in that of English in particular. In addition to results deriving from teacher questionnaire and answers provided by respondents, resort will be made to classroom observations and archival data from I.N.D.R.A.P to discuss the issue in question. The activities undertaken at the level of this National Institute are of utmost importance to this part of the research because they serve as barometer of what is happening in the various components of the system. Furthermore, the Tyler's model of the curriculum we referred to in chapter three can be easily applied to I.N.D.R.A.P which caters for (1) aims and objectives, (2) content, (3) pedagogy, (4) evaluation, (5) curriculum development and innovation.

However, before discussing the topic of this section, it is interesting to have a brief account of the identity of the teachers involved in the investigation. Thus as the table on teachers' age (cf Appendix E) shows about 3/5 of the teachers (60.2%) are aged between 30 and 40, while the remaining 2/5 (with the exception of 1 who is over 50 – thus 5 years away from retirement) comprise younger teachers, aged below 30. Genarally speaking, the **secondary school staff is relatively young,**

which in itself is a good thing in that young people are more receptive to change and implementation of innovations.

As for table 5.53 it indicates that out of the 133 teachers who took part in the inquiry, **the majority (51.1%) came to teaching voluntarily,** that about 2/6 of them (33.8%) became teachers because they were oriented to teacher training institutions by the National Committee of Orientation. A small number of the teacher sample (5.3%) acknowledged to have come to teaching because there was no other alternative. As far as those who accepted to teach on account of parental advice they were very few, (i.e 2.3%).

Table 5.53 — Q 72 How Did You Come to Teaching

Motives	Frequency	%
By Vocation	72	51.1
No Other Alternative	7	5.3
Choice of Nat. Comm.	45	33.8
Other	4	3.0
Missing	2	1.5
Total	133	100.00

The crosstabulation relating to these results discloses that the **majority of English teachers (68.0%) have come to teaching from their own volition,** that about 1/5 of them (20%) became teachers because they were either oriented by the National Committee of Orientation (12.0%) or advised by their parents (8.0%). The remaining English teachers (12%) reckon to have become teachers because they had no other choice. As regards teachers of French or Mathematics, the results regarding vocational choice, are rather lower than those found in answers

given by teachers of English. As a matter of fact, the majority of the teachers of French (58.3%) came to teaching for vocational reasons, while these results are 52.6% for teachers of Mathematics.

Furthermore, more than half of the teacher sample attended a teacher-training institution (Ecole Normale or Faculté de Pédagogie) (58.7%), while the majority of the remaining teachers undertook their studies either at the Faculté des Lettres (20.3%) or at the Faculté des Sciences (9.0%) as shown in table 5.54. It should be added that a small number of teachers (7.5%) were undertaking their one year national service after graduation from either engineering, or medicine, or agriculture schools.

Table 5.54 — Q 75 Which Institution Catered for Your Training

Institutions	Frequency	%
Ecole Normale	21	15.8
Faculty of Pedagogy	57	42.9
Faculty of Letters	12	9.0
Faculty of Sciences	27	20.3
Other	10	7.5
Missing	6	4.5
Total	133	100.0

5.7.1 Teacher Development

Table 5.55 indicates that less than half of the teachers (42.1%) attended an in-service training session, whilst more than half of them acknowledged to have never had the opportunity to take part in an in-service seminar, and the minority (7.5%) remained silent on the issue.

A crosstabulation of the same results reveals that **more than 3/5 of the teachers of English (68.0%) attended *one* in-service training session.** This figure is 36.4 % for teachers of French, 11.8 % for History and Geography teachers, and 14.3 % for Physics teachers and 87.5% for Biology teachers.

Table 5.55 — Q Have You Ever Attended An In-Service Training Session?

Answer	Frequency	%
YES	56	42.1
Never	68	51.1
Missing	9	6.8
Total	133	100.0

Regarding the attendence frequency, it may be said that those who attended an in-service training seminar *once* (irrespective of their subjects) are more numerous than those who attended such pegagogical gathering *twice* (13.5%) or *three times* (6.8%) or *four times* (.8%) or *five times* (2.3%).

A crosstabulation of these results indicates that **the vast majority of teachers of English (70.6%) attended an in-service seminar at least once,** while the remaining teachers had the chance to attend INSET sessions *twice* (11.1%), *thrice* (11.8%) and *5 times* (5.9%). The same crosstabulation shows that 1/4 of the teachers of French (25%) attended an INSET session *once*, while the vast majority (75.0%) had the opportunity to attend an INSET session *twice*. As for Mathematics, half of the teachers (50%) attended *one* session, while more than 1/3 attended *two* seesions (33.3%) and the rest (16.7%) attended *three* sessions. It is noteworthy that archival records from I.N.D.R.A.P. show that INSET topics in English are (1)

selected by the teachers themselves so as (2) to address their needs and problems.

5.7.2 Sponsors of In-Service Training Sessions

With regard to the institutions which organised these in-service training sessions they may be thus ranked:

- 1st Bureau d' Appui Pédagogique (B.A.P.)
- 2nd Coopération Française
- 3rd British Council.

Table 5.56 gives more details as to the frequencies and percentages regarding each institution which took part in the education of secondary school teachers.

Table 5.56 — Q 116: What Organisation Sponsored the In-Service Training Session

Subject Teachers	Frequencies	%	Rank
Ministry of Education	06	4.5	5th
Ministry of Higher Education	01	.8	7th
Niamey University	01	.8	7th
Say University	01	.8	7th
I.N.D.R.A.P	07	5.3	4th
Bureau d' Appui Pédagogique	18	13.5	1st
American Cultural Centre	01	.8	7th
Coopération Française	11	8.3	2nd
American Peace Corps	04	3.0	6th
British Council	08	6.1	3rd
Missing	75	56.4	—

A crosstabulation of the same results reveals that the majority of the English

teachers (58.8%) attended in-service seminars organised either by the British Council (29.4%) or the Peace Corps (23.5%) and the American Cultural Centre (5.9%). the rest of the teachers attended seminars organised by I.N.D.R.A.P (23.5%), the Ministry of Education (11.8%) and the Ministry of Higher Education (5.9%).

So far it may be said that **the majority of the English teachers have attended at least one in-service training session,** while a small number have had the opportunity to take part in two or more sessions. These pedagogical activities added to the usual internal pedagogical undertakings of English teachers, *viz. Unité Pédagogique* and *mini-journées pédagogiques vide supra*, may enable us at this stage, to say that **teachers of English are kept abreast of new pedagogical trends and that their young age may also be a factor contributing to accepting innovations.**

5.7.3 Respondents Views Regarding Innovation in the Curriculum

All the 14 interviewees agree that innovations are taking place both in primary and secondary curricula and **that English seems to take the lead in the domain of curriculum development and textbook design.** The interview held with the Head of the Letters and Humanities Department more about the implementation of innovation at I.N.D.R.A.P, which is seen as the 'brain' of the educational system. As a matter of fact, he concedes that innovative changes are occurring in the field of teachers' attitudes, student assessment, curriculum development and textbook design. He also acknowledges that, **as regards secondary education progress is more noticeable in English where textbooks have already been designed.** The following few lines are excerpts of his view on the innovation issue:

> **En anglais, des initiatives en ce qui concerne le matériel didactique on été faites**

par la section anglais. Des livres sont actuellement en edition. [Donc], au niveau de l'enseignement secondaire, le progrès est plus notoire en anglais ... (Interview transcript No. 2).

Another similar view is thus held by an inspector for secondary education:

> Il y a des innovations dans presque toutes les matières. On peut dire que d'abord en anglais, nous sommes presque à la fin du 'système'. Je crois que "English for the Sahel" est en train d'être terminé même pour les troisièmes. Maintenant en 6ème, 5ème on pense même passer à la généralisation. On a dépassé le stade d'expérimentation (Interview transcript No. 5).

Another participant, who is both a parent and a teacher pointed out that innovations are implemented in French and in English, mostly in methodology and that in general, the innovators are the advisers of the subjects in question, while teachers are passive – a criticism which, in no circumstances, concerns the teachers of English. As for the results drawn from these innovations, he rightly pointed out that 'it is difficult to talk of results for they are not evident and that an evaluation is needed' – which to some extent is what we are trying to do. Below are his exact words:

> Il y'a eu des changements en anglais et en français. Ces innovations concernent essentiellement la démarche pédagogique. Cette volonté d'innover généralement vient des Conseillers Pédagogiques. Les professeurs sont passifs dans la prise de décision, l'orientation des innovations et ne font que suivre ce qui leur est présenté. Il est difficile de dire si ces innovations ont contribué à l'amélioration des disciplines mentionnées, car les résultats ne sont encore évidents. Une réelle évaluation doit être faite par les initiateurs (Interview transcript No. 9).

Indeed, 'improvement of the curriculum', an expression used by the aforementioned participant, is at the heart of all undertakings in English, and we do not think we need to repeat the way the English curriculum has been improved, and the way people involved in teacher education and teaching are active in and serious about their work as explained by an E.L.T. Adviser:

> All I can say, is that in a general sort of way, we take our work seriously. I think we are perceived as trying to improve the standards of English language efficiency in the country, and teachers react to this positively. They feel that they are looked

> after to some degree, and to some degree supplied with documentation which they need to get on their job. This tends to motivate teachers and we feel that teachers will be motivated by this, because they feel we are taking the job seriously (Interview transcript No. 6).

5.7.4 Classroom Observations

Classroom observations revealed that out of the 10 teachers visited 8 presented a whole hour lesson without recourse to French, which indeed means that the various pedagogical meetings which put the emphasis on 'teaching English in English' have borne fruit. The two other teachers, did from time to time resort to French mainly to explain abstract words – which in itself in not a serious offence to the principles of TEFL.

Furthermore, all ten teachers managed to keep the pace of the lessons at a reasonable rate that avoided boredom to students or other teacher observers. In most cases, teachers gave models to follow, students were asked to repeat chorally or in groups (in small classes), or ask one another questions using a specific question and a given answer model as in the instance below:

(1) Teacher: Where did Bola's grand father go?

(2) Student1: He went to Lagos to see his son.

(3) Teacher: Student1, ask someone the same question.

(4) Student1: Amadou, where did Bola grand father go?

(5) Amadou : Bola's grand father went to Lagos to see his son.

(6) Teacher: Very good! Now, Who can describe picture one? what do you see?

The five grammar lessons observed are based on an amalgam of the audio-lingual method (mechanical, semi-mechanical and communicative drills), the Total

Physical Response approach to teach some verbs though action, and the communicative approach whereby the teachers tried to give the students the freedom to use the language (a kind of pseudo-communicative language teaching).

What is to be mentioned is that in all ten lessons teachers did not monopolize speech and that students did have ample time to practise grammatical structures, or lexical items or do some reading or writing. No matter what the level is, the classroom observations have revealed the following interaction pattern:

(a) teacher student interaction;

(b) the student's response;

(c) the teacher's follow-up;

(d) student to student interaction (in 6ème and 5ème).

In higher classes (3ème, 2nd, 1ère, and *terminale*) the pattern is reduced to three – except when students themselves are giving an exposé as was the case in two lessons observed in 3ème and 2nd (*vide infra*).

(a) teacher trying to lead students to come with opinions about given topics

(b) students' responses;

(b) teacher's follow-up.

An interesting point to note is the way *exposés* are organised. The teacher suggests a certain number of topics to the class which s/he divides into four or five groups, according to the number of topics to be discussed. Each goup chooses a topic and works on it (during their free time) for a week or so before presenting it to the class for a period of 10 to 15 minutes. The presentation is always followed by questions coming from other students. As for the teacher, s/he from time to

time intervenes to provides students with words they are struggling to find.

In one of the classes we observed (3ème) students discussed the marriage issue. The topic itself was divided into four subtopics (1) advantage and disadvantages of marriage (2) age of getting married (3) who should be the partner (4) common or separate accounts. The discussion went well and students were so enthusiastic that they asked the teacher to pursue the discussion though the bell rang. Students exchanged 'naturally' their ideas, the teacher intervening to restore order.

The other lesson which was an exposé was observed in a *seconde class* where four groups of students had to present two topics: (1) choosing a career and (2) violence vs non-violence. As was the case in the aforementioned class students actively took part in the discussions. In both *exposés* observed the teacher/student talk ratio was that advocated in the communicative approach i.e students were the initiators of the communication and directed it as they wanted.

The lesson to draw from these observations is that in general teachers showed a genuine interest in what they were doing as well as in the answers of their students, which indeed motivated them. In all ten lessons it was perceptible that learning was taking place and that students enjoyed their lessons. Finally, it noteworthy that all ten teachers showed a good grasp of language learning and language teaching in particular, which is undoubtedly a sign that the in-service training sessions, the *journées pédagogiques* and the activities of the *Unités Pédagogiques* are bearing fruit.

5.7.5 Pedagogical Activities of I.N.D.R.A.P.

If one flips through the annual report of I.N.D.R.A.P (Addo 1991:1-5) one realizes that the achievements of the English department, in comparison to what

was done elsewhere in this institute in not only revealing but also highly encouraging for it is a sign that 'something' is being done for English teachers and their students. Thus, the report points out that in 1990-1991 the following activities were carried out by the E.L.T team of I.N.D.R.A.P:

- Reviewing of the English textbooks *English for the Sahel*;
- Piloting texts and language exercises in *terminale* classes;
- Organising three regional in-service training sessions for first cycle English teachers (31 teachers in Tillabery from 22 - 26 October 1990; 31 teachers in Dosso from 14 - 18 February, 1991; and 13 teachers in Diffa from 22 - 25 April, 1991.
- Organising three national in-service training sessions for E.L.T. Advisers (25 ELT advisers at I.N.D.R.A.P from 3 - 5 May 3, 1990; 21 E.L.T. Advisers in Maradi from 25 - 27 February, 1991; and 20 E.L.T. Advisers in Konni from 4 - 6 June 1991.
- Training of 4 E.L.T. Advisers from Niamey Inspectorates;
- Participating in the initial training of students at the University;
- Visiting teachers and E.L.T. Advisers in the interior of the country
- Broadcasting distance teaching programmes for English teachers on the national radio station;
- Making of video-films for teachers.

Regarding French, History and Geography, the same annual report pointed out that activities in connection with innovation were carried out chiefly at the level of primary education. As for Mathematics and Science, comments cannot be

made here because the annual report of the Science and Mathematics Department of I.N.D.R.A.P has not been made available.

As a summary to this section, it may be said that the teacher questionnaire, the interviews, the classroom observations and the archival records, all reveal in different ways that a lot of activities relating to innovation are taking place in some subjects and in English in particular.

5.8 Education Area VI: Educational Problems and Suggestions

The table below relating to teachers' perceptions indicates that all ten variables considered are serious problems hampering the development of education in Niger. As a matter of fact, the least serious of these is **teachers' motivation**, only 65.4% thinking that it is either an extremely serious (i.e 5 on the table), or very serious (i.e 4 on the table) or serious problem (i.e 3 on the table). The most severe is that of **falling standards**, the vast majority of teachers (86.4%) thinking that it is the most serious problem of all. According to teachers, the second most serious problem is the **limited resources of the Ministry** (84.9%), followed by **teacher training** and **teaching materials** both of which occupy the 3rd position (80.4%).

Table 5.57 — Item 116: Teachers' Perceptions of the Educational Problems

Education Problems	1	2	3	4	5	3+4+5	Ranking
Limited Resources	8.3%	5.3%	12.0%	32.3%	40.6%	84.9	2nd
Staff Shortage	3.8%	18.0%	23.3%	27.1%	23.3%	73.7	8th
Inadequate Syllabi	6.8%	6.0%	15.0%	26.3%	38.3%	79.6	5th
Overcrowded Classes	9.0%	8.3%	12.0%	27.1%	38.3%	77.4	6th
Falling Standards	4.5%	6.0%	15.0%	27.8%	43.6%	86.4	1st
Loss Rate	4.5%	11.3%	21.8%	25.6%	26.3%	73.7	8th
Students' Motivation	7.5%	12.0%	18.8%	28.6%	28.6%	76.0	7th
Teachers' Motiva.	13.5%	16.5%	15.0%	22.6%	27.8%	65.4	10th
Inadequate Teach. Train.	9.0%	5.3%	17.3%	27.1%	36.1%	80.4	3rd
Inapprop. Textbooks	6.8%	6.0%	18.8%	30.8%	30.8%	80.4	3rd

Students were also asked to give their perception of their class size. The majority of the students (47.0%) found their class size either very high or just high or fairly high, while about 2/5 of them found their class size acceptable (38.0%). As for the number of those who found the size of their class low, it was small (9.7%). These results (cf table 5.58) are important to the study because students' perceptions of their class size has to be taken into account in interpreting falling standards or loss rates.

Since there are students who find their class size either overcrowded or low, what then is the ideal class size according to them? As table 5.59 shows, the majority of the students (44.7%) think that a class of 31 to 40 students would be the ideal, while about 2/5 of them (28.6%) think that a class should have between 20 and 30 students. If we consider the two extremes, it can be seen that less than 10% of the students view the figure of 20 as the ideal class size, while less than

Table 5.58 — Item 81 (St. Quest.) How Do you Find Your Class Size?

Class Size	Frequencies	Percentages
Very High	434	24.3
High	205	11.5
Fairly High	201	11.2
Acceptable	680	38.0
Very Low	118	6.6
Low	27	1.5
Fairly Low	28	1.6
Other	11	.6
Missing	84	4.7
Total	1788	100.0

Table 5.59 — Item 82 (In Student Questionnaire.) How Do you Find Your Class Size?

Class Size	Frequencies	Percentages
20 Students	151	8.4
Between 20 & 30	512	28.4
Between 31 & 40	799	44.7
Between 41 & 50	192	10.7
Between 51 & 60	55	3.1
More than 60	6	.3
Missing	73	4.1
Total	1788	100.0

1% consider that the ideal class should have more than 60 students. It should be noted in passing that classes in town are in general overcrowded, with an average of 40 to 50 students while in general, those in rural areas register less students -

below 30 students. Similarly, in *lycées* the total number of students in 1ère D and 1ère C is lower than that of 1ère A, simply because many students abandon the C or D streams to join the A stream.

Because education has been the *the black sheep* of the *Fonction Publique*, it would be interesting to know if students still prefer such jobs as customs, or the army where one can easily acquire wealth, or if the recent social and political events have changed their conceptions relating to the choice of jobs. It would indeed be a threat to the teaching profession in Niger if students continue to perceive it as one of the least rewarding or important jobs. Thus table 5.60 reveals that today more than 1/5 (23.5%) would choose a job relating to **health** while about the same number would also choose **teaching** (23.3%). These two careers are respectively, the most popular, **customs** (3rd, 12.9%) and **agriculture** (4th, 12.0%), following. Students seem less interested in **veterinary** and **engineering jobs**, which are ranked 7th (2.2%) and 8th (1.6%), respectively.

All 14 respondents agree that the problems hindering the Ministry are found (1) in the internal organisation of the Ministry (2) at the level of the academic setting and (3) at the resources level. The following page examine the respondants' views, some being quoted *in extenso* because of their importance.

Let us start with the view given by one of the interviewees who concedes that the problems of the Nigérien educational are threefold and may thus be summarized: (1) the highly centralized nature of the system which gives little room for manoeuver in terms of (a) conceving plans that satisfy their regional needs, and (b) finding out solutions to their specific problems; (2) this highly centralized system results in poor planning; (3) the centalization of the system also leads to poor academic achievements. The following recounts his exact words;

Table 5.60 — Item 83 (St. Quest.) Which Career Will You Choose at the End of Your Studies?

Career	Frequencies	Percentages	Ranking
Agriculture	214	12.0	4th
Army	186	10.4	5th
Building	29	1.6	8th
Veterinary	39	2.2	7th
Teaching	416	23.3	2nd
Customs	231	12.9	3rd
Health	431	23.5	1st
Other	164	9.2	6th
Missing			
Total	1788	100.0	—

Aujourd'hui du point de vue organisation, notre système éducatif souffre d'une centralisation qui ne favorise pas une bonne gestion sur les plans financiers et académiques.

(a) Au plan financier, le budget alloué au Ministère qui comprend un budget d'investissement et un budget de fonctionnement est centralisé au Ministère et régi par deux directions: (1) la Direction des Etudes et de la Planification pour le budget d'investissement et (2) la Direction des Affaires Financières pour le budget de fonctionnement. Et ce sont les directions techniques telles que la D.E.P.D., la D.E.S.T., la D.E.A., etc... qui expriment leurs besoins auprès de l'une ou l'autre des directions d'appui dont je viens de parler à savoir, la D.A.F. et la D.E.P. Cette situation entraîne les méfaits suivants: manque d'autonomie qui empêche les régions de résoudre des problèmes spécifiques, le retard dans la ventilation des fournitures, etc...
(b) Au plan académique, la Direction de l'Enseignement Secondaire et Technique (D.E.S.T.) a sous son autorité des Inspections Départementales et des Inspections de l'Enseignement Secondaire et Technique qui encadrent les établissements des 1er et 2nd cycles. Ces établissements sont sous l'autorité des directeurs et proviseurs soutenus par les surveillants généraux. Signalons qu'il existe les Unités Pédagogiques. D'une manière générale, le gros problème que connait le fonctionnement de l'école au niveau de l'Enseignement Secondaire, c'est une certaine centralisation au plan financier et au plan académique. Peu d'autonomie est laissée aux régions (Interview transcript No. 3).

Planning has been referred to a lot in the various interviews. Most of the participants noted that the lack of good planning has undermined the limited

resources of the Ministry. One of the interviewees, a sociologist by profession, advocates that teachers, Heads of schools, policy-makers, inspectors and subject advisors, should all be initiated to planning and management. He gave the example of European countries where school textbooks can be used by three 'generations' (i.e a young pupil within a family may have in his/her possession a book that his/her two older brothers or sisters had used at school years ago) whereas in Niger, books become deteriorated after a year or so. The following lines are his suggestions:

> Il faudrait donc appliquer un système de gestion qui puisse être le moins consomateur de ressources possible. Donc faire beaucoup d'économies pour réduire les dépenses de l'éducation qui pèsent lourd sur le budget. Vous savez que la seule éducation consomme assez régulièrement près de 23% du budget national et donc cela est un déséquilibre extrême par rapport à d'autres urgences. Je crois qu'on peut remédier à cet ensemble de problèmes en formant des opérateurs de l'éducation à la gestion, je veut dire les enseignants, les gens des services centraux, de l'encadrement pédagogique, les inspecteurs, etc... etc..., les initier à la gestion, les initier à la planification et aussi les inciter à la créativité, et à l'entretien du matériel (Interview transcript No. 4)

Academic problems can partly find their solutions through the institutionalization of the *Unités Pédagogiques* (*vide supra*:chap.3). Such a view is expressed in the following terms:

> J'estime aussi que ces Unités Pédagogiques qu'on prend à la légère, ne sont pas à prendre à la légère puisse qu'elles peuvent résoudre pas mal de problèmes. Parce qu'on sait que dans l'enseignement, personne n'est parfait, même en fin de carrière on peut commettre des erreurs. Donc, ces Unités Pédagogiques, nous devons tout faire pour qu'elles s'installent, pour qu'elles vivent (Interview transcript No. 5).

As he rightly pointed out elsewhere in the interview there exist teachers for whom the various meetings held in the framework of the *Unité Pédagogique* are indeed a burden, especially if these meetings are held after working hours, or at weekends. Considering the lack or acute shortage of teacher-trainers in some sujects *viz.* in Science, Mathematics, Arabic, Humanities, and foreign languages (except

English which has about half of the overall teacher-trainers), there is however no other choice than to develop and improve this form of action-research.

In the same vein, it should be mentioned that the majority of the participants view the academic problems as a corollary of teacher development. One of them argues that the immediate solution to the academic problems would be the improvement of teacher education. He concedes that even if an instrument has been improved to perfection, it is useful only in 'knowledgeable' hands. He added in substance that a system is only worth what the people in charge of its setting up are worth. Briefly, here are his viewpoints:

> Pour qu'il y ait une amélioration du système éducatif, il faudrait d'abord améliorer le personnel. On dit que l'outil le plus perfectioné ne peut être valable que dans des mains de bonne qualité. Vous aurez beau perfectionner un outil, un système ne vaut que ce que valent les hommes qui sont chargés de sa mise en application ... Il faut former les enseignants, il faut former ceux qui veillent sur les enseignants d'abord. Moi je pense que l'innovation de tout système, la mise en valeur de tout système, dépend des hommes qui sont chargés de la mise en application de ce système là. D'abord avant de voir programmes et autres, il faut voir d'abord les hommes qui sont chargés de la mise en application du système (Interview transcript No. 1).

Another important problem an interviewee referrred to is that pertaining to the dearth of educational research in Niger. He stressed that the problems hampering the development of the educational should be scientifically studied and analysed in order to find them definitive solutions. This is a fair comment because, though there exists a national institute in charge of research very little investigation (not to say no investigation at all) has been undertaken in the field of (1) the philosophy of education, (2) the sociology of education and (3) large-scale educational investigations. One of the respondents, a well known figure in the field of Nigérien education, is of the view that research, such as that undertaken by this author, should be encouraged and extended to many people, if our educational problems are to be found solutions.

Les conclusions que je tire sont évidemment relatives à l'école nigérienne et je crois que des gens, des chercheurs comme l'auteur de ces questionnaires vont faire oeuvre utile lorsqu'ils vont appronfondir tous les problèmes qui se posent à l'école nigérienne. C'est en essayant de les approfondir, en essayant de les éclaircir, en essayant de les situer, de leur donner une dimension exacte, c'est par des études approfondies sur les maux de l'école nigérienne qu'on arrivera à trouver une solution .... Je pense que si des initiatives comme-ça se prennent à plusieurs niveaux, par plusieurs personnes, le résultat sera encourageant et permettra cette amélioration de l'enseignement au Niger que nous souhaitons tous (Interview transcript No. 7).

A very important point mentioned by some respondents is that national languages should be used as a means of instruction. For them, national languages may help children in their schooling, but this is a subject too complex to enter here.

Participants unanimously agree that the value of the teaching profession should be reasserted if the system is to be improved. As already said, today, teachers are the least considered civil-servants in the country, which is very unfortunate for it is they who are in charge of the country's youth, thus its future. Suggestions leading to improvement of the teacher's status are numerous. Amongst them are, obviously, pay rises and increased opportunity to climb the administrative ladder through exams. Such views are thus expressed:

Les suggestions, elles sont très nombreuses, mais pour une première partie je vais me limiter aux suggestions matérielles. Il faut **revaloriser** cette fonction. La fonction enseignante au Niger a été dépréciée depuis un certain temps. Il y a un certain numbre de problèmes que tout le monde connaît: tous les problèmes qui font que l'école nigérienne ne marche pas ont été purement et simplement attribués au corps enseignant. Par ailleurs, il ne faut pas faire venir à l'enseignement ceux qui n'ont pas pu être orientés. Il faut que ce soit les meilleurs et pour obtenir les meilleurs, il faut que les enseignants soient recrutés sur concours. C'est essentiel et fondamental (Interview transcript No. 14).

Finally, other views expressed concern the efforts that all citizens should make to improve the system. Such as phrases as **sacrifice of all concerned by education**, or the **mobilisation of all Nigériens to face the educational problems** were repeated here and there.

Such instances are given below:

> .... Tout le reste relève de la volonté du pouvoir public et de sa capacité à faire **accepter des sacrifices incontournables** (Interview transcript No. 9).

or the folowing answer which puts the emphasis on 'the mobilisation of all Nigériens around the educational matters' for, as the interviewee explained, 'it is from schools that will graduate competent physicians who will enable us to 'reach health for all by the year 2000, or engineers who will save us from the advance of the desert, and thus reach self-sufficiency in food for ever ....'

This beautiful analogy is thus captured:

> Donc pour nous résumer, il faut mobiliser tous les nigériens autour de l'école parce que c'est l'avenir du pays, parce que c'est de là que sortiront les médecins compétents pour atteindre la santé pour tous en l'an 2000, parce que c'est dans cette école qu'il faut former des ingénieurs qui vont nous sauver de la désertification et atteindre l'autosuffisance alimentaire permanente, parce que c'est dans cette école qu'il faut former les diplomates qui vont mobiliser des moyens autour de ce désert qui nous englouti, parce que c'est dans cette école qu'il faut former des géstionnaires compétents, parce que c'est de cette école que vont sortir ces enseignants, ces éducateurs et ces dépositeurs de bonnes moeurs – si je me permets l'expression – , l'enjeu est capital. Donc il faut mettre ces enseignants dans de bonnes conditions; il faut créer et entretenir la motivation en eux (Interview transcript No. 2).

5.9 Summary of Education Area VI

As shown above, the problems inherent to the educational system are multifarious and found in all the components of the curriculum (taken in its large meaning). The following ones can be listed:

- The highly centralized system which has been decried and viewed as the source of many financial and academic problems;
- The falling standards which lead to high drop-out rates;
- The limited resources of the Ministry;
- The inappropriateness of teacher training;

- The inappropriateness of the syllabi;
- The inappropriateness of the teaching materials.

As for the solutions advocated by the participants they may be thus summed up:

- Emphasis is to be laid on the training of teacher-trainers and that of teachers, for the education of the youth, who constitute the future of any country is in the hands of teachers;
- Planning and school management should be two key notions that could help us obtain the most out of our limited resources;
- Our national languages should be promoted and used as means of instruction;
- All Nigériens should be concerned by all educational matters and should accept to offer sacrifices;
- The teaching profession should be given more attention.

5.10 Data Interpretation

5.10.1 Introduction

To begin this chapter, firstly the the generalisation of the findings, and secondly the level of interpretation are discussed, two key areas in any empirical data analysis and interpretation. Firstly, it should be noted it is possible to generalise the findings of this inquiry because of the following reasons:

(a) it has been shown in the research design chapter that the study is based on a representative sample which includes all the main perceived elements by which one population could be differentiated from another. Instances of such features

are: geographical location, administrative repartition, sex, the nature of the schools, and the education level.

(b) the nonparametric measurements used are designed to enable one to generalise; thus in the Mann-Whitney U test there is the ability to generalise with such elements as gender (male/female students), locality (rural/urban schools), nature of schools (private/state schools) and the education level (first cycle/second cycle schools) or in the Kruskal-Wallis, the ability to generalise the features of regions.

It is useful to add that content and construct validity have been demonstrated in the previous chapters and so has concurrent validity through the use of many methods.

The present data interpretation is the fruit of a 'confrontation' of views between the researcher and a 'critical-friend' (McCormick & James, 1990:143) who was asked to come up with opinions relating to the various aspects of the data. Needless to say that this 'critical-friend' has a good grasp of the Nigérien education *milieu*, being himself an experienced Nigérien teacher of English. In addition, findings and their interpretations were discussed with an English 'critical-friend' in order to obtain an outsider's perspective.

Such a precaution has enabled us to give a range of interpretations which fit the cases best, but retained the ones which accord with the context set in the early chapter. Procedurally, we have opted for the internal coherence in interpretation of the data, by looking at all the data, rather than selectively, i.e looking at it variable by variable. The six educational areas examined in the preceding chapter will obviously be referred to in a broader way, which explains the restricted size of the present chapter whose main objective is to highlight the the major issues

hitherto discussed.

Finally, it is also worth noting that our main concern in the interpretation of the data was to avoid going beyond the bounds of the data themselves. The present study has resulted in many interesting findings, some of which, as in many research studies, are at variance with previous studies.

5.10.2 Reflection on the Overall Results

The context of educational value and the background to the fieldwork undertaken have to be considered when looking at the clarity of some results.

From the inception of formal education up to 1990, people were made to believe that school was the main, if not the only means of acquiring a well paid job, that anything linked with manual work was debasing, and that only intellectual work prevailed. It is very frequent today to hear parents say to their children *idon ka ki lakkol, kai ka halaka hal abada*!' in other words 'if you don' t like school, you are lost for ever'. Hence, school is the battle horse leading to success in life, and jobs. This reality is beautifully captured by Dr Mounkeila, former Secretary General of the Ministry of Education and General Counsellor, in the interview we had with him:

> ..... Si l'on se base sur ces exemples, on comprend alors que l'école actuelle n'est pas une institution éducative, elle est l'antichambre de fonctionnarisme et la voie de désertion du milieu rural; et cette situation fait que l'élève nigérien fréquente l'école pour une promotion à la Fonction Publique qui demeure de loin le service employeur.

During the time that the fieldwork was undertaken in Niger, students and the trade-unions were vehemently struggling for radical political, social, economic changes. Under such circumstances, any concealment of the views of the students or the teachers can be ruled out because they were seeking change not only in

the interest of the educational system but also in that of the entire nation. In short, students as well as teachers revealed their exact opinions and did not say things to please just one individual (i.e the investigator) or groups of people, for the investigation took place during what the students themselves called *l' heure de la vérité*, i.e the hour of truth. However, we acknowledge that human beings are complex creatures from all points of view, and that no human endeavour is perfect.

5.10.3 Interpretation of Findings About School

As already observed, Nigérien students in general like school though this is contrary to what many parents, some teachers and even some school administrators think. Such a view is probably the easiest and simplest way of explaining the problems relating to students' (poor) achievements. Thus, such parameters as parental encouragement, the teacher and his/her methodology or his/her rapport with students, or the work conditions in which the teacher and the students are placed, or the evaluation system itself are not referred to in trying to understand students' schooling problems.

The typical student's opinion of school is not at all surprising, most people in Niger viewing school as a salutary path enabling the individual to obtain a 'place in the sun' – a view deeply engrained in the educational system. In effect, until recently (1991-92), the Ministry of Employment unfailingly provided a job to every single student who had successfully completed his/her further or vocational education. Thus, it is not an exaggeration to say that for students school is comparable to a fight for life.

If it is true that secondary school students like school, it is equally true that

girls' attitudes towards school are more positive than boys', and that the Nigérien secondary students from rural areas like school more than those living in urban areas. Again the common denominator to these two cases is the perception according to which school enables one to succeed in life, and girls and rural students alike have been for some time the "forgotten children" of the system, and therefore feel it is high time they caught up with their male or urban counterparts.

Besides this interpretation of the Nigérien reality, other studies of Europeans studies have also revealed that girls show a more positive attitude towards school than boys (Harvey, 1985:281).

It is also interesting to note that private school students show a more positive attitude towards school than those at state schools. In this instance, it must be noted that in Niger, unlike in Europe, the population of private secondary schools is mostly made up of students expelled from state schools. These students are fully aware of the fact that firstly, school fees are paid by their parents, and secondly, it is their last chance for they cannot continue to repeat classes.

The positive attitudes that students in general, and girls and rural students in particular, show to school should be taken seriously by the state for the following reasons:

(1) It is a fact that students like school, and this combined with the country's high birth rate mean that the Ministry is far from being able to fulfull its prime duty, i.e educating all the children who are of school age, let alone from providing every single graduate with a job.

(2) The vast majority of students still believe that at the end of their studies they should be employed by the state – which is quite impossible for any nation in

the world to achieve, let alone a developing country such as Niger. It is the duty of the state to educate its children and make them understand that job provision is the duty of individual students who graduate from school. If this is not done, education in Niger will always be disturbed by student unrest.

Another lesson that could be drawn from the analysis of these findings is that people involved in education should stop using students as scapegoats of the system's failure. Teachers have to question their teaching methods and their relationships with their students; the Ministry has to question its approaches in dealing with human resources or planning. It is axiomatic to say that a prerequisite for success in any enterprise is a positive attitude in the endeavour – and Nigérien students do have positive attitudes towards school.

The students have also shown positive attitudes towards the various subjects of the curriculum. However it should be stressed that boys have shown a more positive attitude towards Mathematics and Science than girls. In effect, until recently in Niger, scientific subjects were the 'private hunting ground' of male students while female students had to look towards secretarial or teaching posts. Since no study has proven that male students are superior in the sciences, one is inclined to say that this discrepency might lie in educational traditions.

However, these findings are in tune with Harvey's (1985:281) study on attitudes towards science, an investigation in which boys are shown to have significantly more positive attitudes towards science and practical science than girls. He, in substance, points out that

> There seem a little doubt that at present science is a man's world. Women are underrepresented in all scientific occupations and this is clearly reflected by children in school. If one considers the relative numbers of boys and girls entered for CSE, GCE 'O' and 'A' level (Harvey, 1980), it is apparent that girls are significantly outnumbered by boys. Only in CSE Biology do girls exceed boys, whilst in 'A' level Physics, the

> ration of boys to girls is four to one. One is left asking the question, whether girls are in fact capable of science?

Harvey also adds that Kelly (1976) has shown in a well documented study on sex differences in a sample of people of varied intellectual ability that 'in areas apparently related to science, as for example, numerical ability, spacial ability and problem solving that boys perform better than girls' (Harvey 1985:281). Needless to say this is indeed an international phenomenon which exists also in Africa.

Similarly, Culley (1992:179-181) in reviewing Burton (1991) observes that 'Maths anxiety' 'is widespread' and that 'for many people mathematics learning is a painful activity'. As regards girls' attitudes towards Mathematics she notes:

> ... It is clear that girls and women are especially disadvantaged in relation to mathematics education. There is a wealth of research to demonstrate that girls' lower participation and achievement in higher level mathematics in particular is not a problem of or with girls, but a problem of and with mathematics education.

Culley (1992:180) points out that there is 'complexity surrounding the construction and persistence of gender differences in educational participation and performance generally and that the search for simple solutions is futile'. However she gives some clues as to how to provide equal opportunity in mathematics education:

> Efforts to improve girls' confidence and achievement in Mathematics must centre on changing the curriculum, both in terms of the content of the discipline and the pedagogy through which it is experienced, rather than on presumed deficiencies among girls.

Looking at students' perceptions of subjects and their achievements shows that students regard French, Mathematics and English as not only important components of the curriculum but also as their favourite subjects. Of these, English is 3rd most popular after Mathematics and French, respectively. Despite its lower popularity however, students performed much better in English than in either of

the other two subjects. Liking a particular subject is thus not sufficient on its own to bring about good results, and there must exist 'something' – other than students' positive attitudes – in English (Language Teaching) which does not exist or is not fully exploited in French and Mathematics .

Another important issue to be discussed is that of the teaching materials. Students in general have rated their textbooks highly while teachers and the interviewed Ministry officials, and I.N.D.R.A.P. personnel were more apprehensive (except for English textbooks). For the students the most important feature in a book of Mathematics or Science is the number of exercises, explanatory tables, drawings or the 'local flavour' and simple vocabulary and syntax in a book of language as explained by Hill and Thomas (1988:45-6)

> Learners require a text with at least four of the following characteristics: the vocabulary must be ninety per cent within their understanding, the syntax and sentence structure must be familiar, the information must not be too dense, and the meaning must be made explicit, especially at the lower level. Given a text which conforms to these requirements, learners can read with enjoyment and improve their mastery of the language.

or

> It is widely assumed that the learners prefer books with familiar if not local background and that they will not read books set in a background that is remote from their experience. We have found that books dealing with a universal theme supported by a good plot and good characterization and with a straightforward narrative style are popular anywhere, provided that the background is not obtrusive (Hill and Thomas, 1988:51).

For the people in the field, the criteria of assessing books go beyond those set by students. Textbooks, according to the Ministry specialists should encapsulate the *savoir*, the *savoir-être*, and the *savoir-faire*. The *savoir* is the knowledge *per se* to transmit to the student, the *savoir-faire* enables the student to use the intrinsic knowledge taught to work out things for him/hersef, and the *savoir-être* which enables him/her to better discover him/herself and the others. It is then the

combination of these three elements and many others that have guided teachers and Ministry officials in their answers. As for the students, at their age they cannot obviously perceive these criteria and they thus limit their perceptions to superficial parameters.

5.10.4 Parental Encouragement

The statistical results obtained on the subject of *parental encouragement* from the students on the one hand, and from the teachers and the interviwees on the other are contradictory in all respects. Students think they get enough parental encouragement because, at home, they are advised to work at school. Furthermore, most of the students view the material support they are provided by their parents as a form of encouragement to not only to attend regularly school but above all, to succeed in their studies. However, for teachers and other people interviewed, this is by no means sufficient, for they argue that parents ought to be more concerned with their children's school achievements and thus:

(a) visit, from time to time, the school attended by their children;

(b) collect their children's reports regularly and take their children's achievements seriously;

(c) be more strict in the education they give their children.

In a sense, teachers are right, for nowadays, the tendency in many families is that of parental resignation over the education of their children, especially if the parents are illiterate. It is common knowledge that the majority of parents view the three-month holidays as a source of worry because teachers will be no longer there to 'take care' of their 'burden'. Parents, in general, expect their children to get all the benefits of education at school, without their participation. Thus the

relationship existing between teachers and many parents may be portrayed as that existing between a shepherd and the owners of the cattle he is taking care of. Such a view is also supported by the Principal of one of the Lycées (*vide supra*) who in substance showed the extent to which many parents were not interested in their children's schooling.

There do of course exist parents who are interested in the studies of their children and who do not content themselves with just verbally encouraging their children. Some help their children do their homework, others hire private teachers – all this with the view to securing a better future for their offspring.

The reasons behind the attitudes of the majority of parents towards their children's schooling should also be examined. As already noted the vast majority of parents are illiterate, which entails that they cannot either help their children or do their homework for instance, or properly understand all the internal structures of the schooling system. Illiterate parents are however not the only ones failing to provide their children with full encouragement. There are also some educated parents – an increasing number over the past few years – who because of varied problems of life (social, financial or personal) are not able to follow their children's studies. Obviously, the losers in this lack of parental supervision are the students, – and of course the state – and as long as teachers and parents do not work hand in hand, serious problems will remain despite any improvement to the system.

5.10.5 English Language Teaching in Niger

It has been reported that, generally speaking, students like English and have in terms of popularity thus ranked it 3rd out of 12 subjects. It can be said without mistake that Nigérien students learn the language not because it is compulsory,

but mainly in order to 'be able to communicate' or to obtain a well-paid job. Such a motivational orientation has been termed *instrumental* because, as Gardner and Lambert (1973:3) explain,

> the purposes of language study reflect the more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement, such as getting ahead in one's occupation.

There is no need to expand on that, for students are fully aware of the importance of English language and the possibilities it offers a persons who masters it. There exist many international organizations based in the country and in Niamey in particular, and posts in such a working environment are open only to those who can speak English.

In contrast to these, there is a handful of students who are learning English in order to increase their understanding of English traditions, culture and society . In Gardner and Lambert's (1973:3) terms their attitude towards learning English is guided by an integrative orientation which they thus define:

> the orientation is integrative if the student wishes to learn more about the other cultural community because he is interested in it in an open-minded way, to the point of eventually being accepted as a member of that other group.

Nigérien students are fond of English music to the extent that during parties and discos they organise, the singers heard are mostly from the English speaking world. As for French or modern Nigérien songs they are hardly played. Furthermore, most of them are 'addicted' to Americam films in general and western films in particular. Many of them also attend the American Cultural Satellite programmes (which of course are in English) or use the facilities of the American Cultural Centre library. There is indeed a manifest interest in the anglophone way of life, the anglophone societies, in a nutshell the English language, the vehicle of culture.

However, it should be added that given the colonial past of the country and the recent educational orientation in regards to the curriculum (promotion of students' culture and emphasis on their environment), students may not want to desert their native roots completely for a new culture, because of the strong feelings of national or ethnic loyalty in Africa today.

Regarding students' attitudes towards languages, it was found that female students enjoy them more than male students do. In French for instance the differences in the responses of these two categories is statistically significant. In English, though female students enjoy English slightly more than male students, the results are not statistically significant. Amongst the reasons that may account for female students positive attitudes towards English and French the following may be advanced:

(a) Nigérien females, by nature are more receptive to learning languages than their males counterparts. Though no specific study has been hitherto undertaken in this area in the country, it has been observed that in married couples who have settled in areas other than theirs, women in most cases learn the language of the region more quickly than their husbands. This is problably owing to the role of women, who by Nigérien standard, are in charge of shopping, or daily attend, (more than men), social gatherings such as naming-ceremonies, weddings, funerals and the like – which briefly speaking requires the mastery or at least the understanding of other languages.

(b) The educational system which, for some time, has unconscienciously developed the view that scientific subjects and Mathematics are for very clever students and that such subjects as History, Geography, Physical Education and languages are for the *rest* of the students – including girls and other non-bright

students. Thus in order to succeed the majority of girls 'cling' to languages and Humanities.

But these are only interpretations related to the Nigérien social and educational environments. Elsewhere, similar results were found. Thus, studies like Willing's (quoted in Sunderland, 1992:87-88) have revealed that both men and women did well in liking to learn new words, but that women were rated more highly than men. She thus reported the findings:

> Willing, investigating learning style ('any individual learner's natural, habitual, and preferred way of learning' (1988:1)) in adult migrants in Australia, found that liking to learn many new words, learning words by seeing, learning words by doing something, and learning by talking to friends in English were all rated highly by both sexes, but significantly more highly by women.

Sunderland (*ibid.*) also refers to 'Oxford, Nyikos, and Ehrman, reviewing studies of strategies ('the steps or actions taken by students to improve their own language learning')' to explain *'gender in the EFL classroom'*. These studies found:

> significant sex differences ... reflecting greater *use of language learning strategies by female* ... In three ... studies ... frequency and variety of strategy use was significantly greater for women ... In study 1, the primary difference was in women's greater use of social behaviors for language learning ... In study 3, women [showed] significantly more frequent use of conversation/input elicitation strategies ... Study 4, ... showed sex differences in authentic language use and in searching for and communicating meaning (1988:321,326).

In England, Loulidi (1990:40) examines, over a certain period of time, the figures of female and male students who sit for French examinations over a certain period. The results as Loulidi (*ibid.*) pointed out revealed 'a decline (especially among boys) in the popularity of subjects such as French or German has been noted in many studies'. The following lines are an excerpt of the findings:

> For instance in a Department of Education and Science Consultative paper in 1983 the figures show that the percentage of girls taking examination in French at age 16 rose from 29.7% in 1971 to 40.3% in 1981, whereas the percentage rise for boys over the same period was 0.3%.

Before dealing with the place of English in Niger in general and in the curriculum in particular, we find it necessary to recall that the Nigérien students like English much more than any other foreign language (*vide supra*:Chap3), for they are aware of the place of English within the *concert des nations*. Furthermore, they have shown positive attitude towards English and their achievements in English are much better than in any of the two major subjects (Mathematics and French). In short as noted by Schmied (1991:164-5)

> Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language in general may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, the degree of importance or status it has in the community or even the importance of the people who use it as a first or second language (Schmied, 1991:164-5).

The key question which was used to measure people's attitude towards English as a component of the curriculum consisted in asking respondents whether they were for or against the removal of English from the curriculum. Indeed, no answer was in favour of the suppression of English. Paralinguistic features were used by many respondents because they were caught by surprise by the question – which was viewed as an inconceivable one. Reference has already been made to this issue in chapter 5, and we think there is no need to come back to that. Some of the answers given tend to mean that French and English should be taken on the same footing, and if English were to be removed then all other languages should undergo the same fate. The few lines below encapsulate such a view:

> Je suis absolument contre la suppression pure et simple de l'anglais du curriculum, car cette suppression n'aurait aucune justification logique; autant supprimer les autres langues ..... Donc, personne ne pourrait prendre la responsabilité de supprimer l'anglais (G. Kaba, U.S.A.I.D. / Niger).

Besides paralinguistic features the respondents also used the repetition of intensifiers, or of the word 'E-n-gli-sh (segment by segment) to show their strict opposition to the idea. Indeed, English more than any other foreign language ben-

efits from the entire support of the students and other people involved in education.

5.10.6 Classroom Observation

The English lessons observed revealed a good classroom participation on the part of the students. Teachers in general avoided monopolizing the speech at the expense of the students, they also avoided as much as they could the use of any language other than English – which in itself is a positive aspects of the innovations implemented in teaching practices. In *6ème* and *5ème*, it is commonly known that English classes are 'noisy' inasmuch as teachers are striving to use choral, group, individual repetions and student/student interaction techniques to make the entire class participate. It should be added in passing that this kind of noise is a positive one, and should in no circumstance be prevented by headmasters – as is the case in some places.

Teachers in general opt for the eclectic approach, an amalgam of Audio-lingual Method, Total Physical Response, Silent-Way and to a lesser extent the Grammar-Translation Method. This is a positive achievement compared to what was being done in the field of teaching English 10 years ago. If Nigérien teachers do not use systematically the communicative method, the favourite approach advocated by outstanding applied linguistists (*vide supra*: Chap3) their option should not be seen as a failure as demonstrated by some research. For example, Swaffar *et al.* (cited in Richards and Rogers 1986:162) 'found that many of the distinctions used to contrast methods, particularly those based on classroom activities, did not exist in actual practice'. Similarly, Long and Sato (1984) (cited in Richards and Rogers (*ibid.*) in a study relating to 'language use in classes taught by teachers trained in "communicative" methodology' found 'the type of language used by the "commu-

nicative" teachers to be very different from the language of natural communication outside the classroom'. Furthermore, Willis (1983) (cited in Coulthard, 1985:157) suggests that all classroom language activities can be grouped into three kinds: *citation*, *simulation* and *replication*, forms which are found in the English lessons observed.

In effect, the classroom observations undertaken during the fieldwork have shown that classroom interaction pattern was mostly based on `the teacher asking questions`, `the students answering` and `the students asking each other question`. Long and Sato's (cited in Richards and Rogers, 1986:162) findings were reported thus:

> Teachers' language shared many of the features of the mechanical question-and-answer drills characteristic of the audiolingual classrooms. Such studies emphasize the need for empirical study of the classroom processes (i.e., the types of utterances, questions-and-answer exchange, turn taking, feedback, and so on) that characterize methods at the level of classroom, as opposed to how they are described by writers on methods.

Finally, with respect to teachers of English in Niger, it should be stressed that, despite the fact that English is neither a second language nor the official language, they have shown a good will to succeed in their profession and by the same token enhance E.L.T. by institutionalizing the use of English in:

- in-service training sessions;
- *mini-journées pédagogiques*;
- *unités pédagogiques* meetings;
- and of course in English classes.

Teachers of English have set a good model of working, and it would be only doing them justice to say that, if their multifarious practices are expanded to the

rest of the subjects, the academic problems of the Ministry would be maximally reduced. Amongst these positive educational practices the following may be listed:

(1) Defining *objectively* the general and specific objectives of the various components of the curriculum. An example is French which is neither a first nor a second, nor a third language for the vast majority of the Nigérien students, and which nonethess, is taught as a first language.

(2) Setting fair and reasonable expectations from pupils – thus a review of the evaluation system is needed in all subjects as was done by English teachers.

(3) Placing the students at the centre of the learning process.

5.10.7 Innovations in E.L.T.

The pillar upholding the study relies on the innovations that E.L.T. has undergone. As mentioned earlier, the curriculum is divided into four major components, *viz* content, aims and objectives, pedagogy and evaluation. In chapter three, archival records were used to demonstrate the various changes that occurred in the English curriculum in terms of the content, aims and objectives, and assessment – which is why emphasis is mostly laid on the pedagogical aspects in the present section.

The results show that the vast majority of teachers of English attended at least *one* in-service training sessions which entails that it is one of the subjects where in-service education efforts have the most been deployed. The facts that (1) teachers of English were consulted before the organization of in-service sessions, and (2) had their needs and concerns addressed during these sessions made these English educational gatherings successful. Because teachers of English felt they were "part of the game" they participated more than in most subjects in a fruitful

implementation of innovative changes.

Another reality of the innovations carried out in English is the variety of the sources providing financial and material support. As a world language the action of English Language teachers have so far been supported by the most powerful countries, namely the United States of America and the United Kingdom – a real breath of air that maybe other subjects miss.

It should also be noted that the innovations operated in the English curriculum have been based on developing the teacher-training staff, an objective which most interviewees consider to be the *sine qua non* step towards improving the system. As surprising as it seems, English which, ten years ago, gave the Ministry serious problems of staffing, does not today experience any form of teacher or teacher-trainer shortage, as is the case of most subjects. This is also an achievement that only good innovation planning and good innovation implementation may fulfill. The approach used to implement the innovative changes in English has been a determining factor which made the difference between English and other subjects. Unlike in some areas where innovations are conceived and implemented by foreign 'experts' employed by the Ministry, innovatives ideas in E.L.T. come form national teachers and advisers who are backed up by their American or British counterparts. The Ministry is consulted mostly for official support and institutionalization of the innovations (*vide supra*:Chap3). Thus, the key to innovation success in English is probably the bottom-up approach. In short, the innovation implemented in English Language Teaching in the area of 'pedagogy' have resulted in, amongst others,

- the organization of many in-service education programmes centred on the teacher;

- the training of qualified and sufficient teacher-trainers within a relatively short period;
- the training of qualified and sufficient teachers of English;
- centring the learning process on the students.

It is to be noted at this stage that the experience gained in E.L.T. should not be kept to English teachers only. It would be useful to organise meetings where teachers of various subjects would discuss together their plans, undertakings and of course problems. Another way of sharing experience is to have a quaterly educational journal which will present 'what is happening' in all areas of the curriculum.

So far students' perceptions of school and the curriculum in general and E.L.T. in particular, parental encouragement and innovation in E.L.T. have been dealt with. What is left is to briefly examine the problems and suggestions leading to the enhancement of the system, an issue which will be referred to in the concluding chapter.

5.10.8 Results Concerning the Problems of the Ministry

Results from all research instruments taken into account enable us to hold the view that the major problems of the Ministry are:

1. the limited resources of the Ministry;
2. the falling standards;
3. teacher development.

With regard to the first point, we should like to start by reiterating a view which has already been made in the introductory chapter. If the variable *limited*

resources is regarded in general as the most serious problem of all, it is owing to the fact that the state remains only contributing to the general / technical and professional education of the Nigérien citizens – a burden it cannot continue to bear. The metaphoric definition of education in which Thompson (1981:21) (Cf chap1) compared education to a football field with many players other than educationists, is indeed to be borne in mind, in solving the educational problems of the system. The economic recession has reached a point where the state on its own cannot carry on its shoulders all the expenses of the education of its children. This obviously entails a sacrifice on the part of all Niger citizens, irrespective of their sex, creed, social status for as Eicher and Chevailler (1991:260) note:

> The conclusion is clear: there is a financial crisis in education in most countries; that crisis is much deeper than macrostatistics reveal and it is not going to disappear soon, especially in developing countries, if new solutions are not found. But the crisis has been intensified by the fact that education is no longer considered as a panacea: there is a doctrinal crisis as well.

This sacrifice combined with the decentralization of the system and good planning will undoubted result in qualitative and quantitative improvement of the system.

The next point to disuss is the falling standards. Though some of the respondents questioned its real meaning (by asking falling standards compared to what?), it may be said without being mistaken that the phenomenon is a reality and that it is the result of many factors, some of which have been dealt with in earlier chapters (*viz.* 1 & 2). Without engaging in any polemic, we simply quote an interviewee who was not at all surprised by the dimension of the issue, for as he claims 'the teachers in charge of the education of children themselves make mistakes, so what do you expect of pupils then?' However, it would be erronous to think that the problem starts and ends there. Other problems such as insufficient or the lack of

parental (according to cases) supervision, inadequacy of teaching materials, the lack of clearly defined educational aims, and the like have been dealt in previous chapters, and many specialists in the field of education agree that they are at the root of the school problem under study. Again only a thorough study of all the factors involved in the issue may lead to an improvement of the students' school achievements.

Regarding the last issue, i.e teacher development it should be pointed out that it needs to be redefined for most subjects. As noted by Kouraogo (1987:171) it should be based on

> new approaches to supervision .... which do not seek to impose on teachers the views and the techniques of the expert, but which encourage instead the former to make the best use of their own resources, to share their experiences with peers, and to promote their own development.

Another serious problem in connection with teacher education in Niger is the lack of subject inspectors. The present system of appointing an inspector for all subjects should be abandoned simply because an inspector whose speciality is let us say English cannot efficiently inspect a teacher of Mathematics or Physics. Hence, numerous are the teachers who have never received the visit of the inspector in their classes.

Furthermore, until recently the Faculty of Letters, the Faculty of Pedagogy and the inspectorates were undertaking their programmes without consulting each other – which resulted in a waste of efforts and energy and a lack of synchronization of teacher education.

If teacher-development is to thrive in Niger to the benefit of the students – hope of the future – teachers should stop expecting to have everything coming from the Ministry and start establishing school-based teacher-development programmes.

Such endeavours are feasible within the framework of *Unités Pédagogiques* where they can improve their skills 'through self-initiated, sustained growth and development' (Kouraogo, 1987:171).

Finally, all concerned by the education academic problems should bear in mind that innovations should be based on "bottom-up, top-down, and sideways interactions between the main parties, with the practising teachers given a key role in the process" (Kouraogo, *ibid.*).

5.11 Conclusion

As a summary to what has been dealt with in the present chapter the following may be noted:

- Students in general enjoy school, a fact which combined with another social factor that is, birth rate, should bring the officials and parent to change their attitudes in handling the system.
- E.L.T. has within a limited amount of time implemented succesful innovations and its experiences can indeed be shared with other subjects.
- The educational problems of the country are more serious than they appear to be and that the implementation of innovations at the level of the structure of the system, the handling of the resources, and the curriculum are the key solutions leading to the healing of the education mishaps.

Chapter VI

Conclusion and Recommendations

> We firmly believe that the (world) crisis in education can be overcome-if: If the people concerned candidly and systematically diagnose their educational problems and plan their educational future in the light of what they uncover in their self-diagnosis. If they do that, and especially if nations will do that together, the action will generate the national energies and the will power [.....] (**Coombs 1968:16**).

6.1 Introduction

A study of this nature customarily brings down the curtain by recapitulating the salient aspects addressed before suggesting ways and means which may enhance the situation under study. With respect to this classic outline, the present work is no exception. This is so inasmuch as the chapter opens with a synoptic, yet profound recall of the major issues (amongst others, the problems hampering the Nigérien educational system, the place of E.L.T. in Niger, the implication of research findings) encapsulated in the various chapters of the thesis. What follows this short account of the study is by no means the magic wand that would resolve the country's educational problems overnight, but rather suggested solutions that would improve secondary education – and by the same token the system as a whole.

Because secondary education is at the centre of the study, priority will be given to the *curriculum*, then the remaining two problematic areas of the system, *viz.* the *financing of education* and the *organization of the Ministry.* For the sake of

clarity and conciseness, we have found it justified to deal with the issues pertaining to the aforementioned domains in turn, (and occasionally) in terms of short-term, mid-term and long-term recommendations.

6.2 Summarising the Findings

Having presented the outline of this chapter, let us then start with the introductory part of the thesis which, in effect set the ground for the subsequent chapters. Hence, chapter one develops the rationale underlying the study. It substantially explains that, as in many socio-educational pieces of work, the present investigation stemmed from a general question, thus stated: *To what extent could English (Language Teaching) – which is felt as a dynamic and successful subject on account of the innovations it has undergone – contribute to the enhancement of the educational system*? This question was explored through 10 specific questions pertaining to the following six educational areas, (i) students' perceptions of school, (ii) their perceptions of the curriculum, (iii) parental encouragement, (iv) E.L.T. in Niger (students' attitudes towards and perceptions of English, place of English in the curriculum and in Niger), (v) innovation in the curriculum, and (vi) educational problems and suggestions. Chapter one also gives a cursory description of the major problems hindering the system. Finally, it announces not only the structure of the work, but also its limitations.

After the introductory chapter that gives a foretaste of the issues which are the concern of this study, the next is more specific in that it attempts to highlight the development of formal education from colonial to post colonial eras. The conclusions at which this chapter arrived at may be thus summed up:

- All the four constituents of the curriculum, i.e aims and objectives, content,

pedagogy (more precisely, teacher education) and evaluation ought to undergo changes to minimize the high waste rate.

- Besides the academic pitfalls the system is experiencing, the state is 'out of breath' and cannot, as it used to do, afford to bear all alone all the primary, secondary and tertiary education costs. A compromise should be reached by all concerned to ease the burden of the state before it is too late.

- Other points that emerge refer to the organization of the Ministry; amongst these issues, the following require urgent solutions: (i) the lack of certain Education Acts, (ii) the lack of sufficient circulation of information, and (iii) the heaviness of the education administrative machinery.

Chapter three sheds more light on the secondary education curriculum by (1) contrasting the major subjects studied and (2) investigating the various innovative changes experienced by English Language Teaching. The conclusion reached shows that unlike in most components of the curriculum, a lot of innovations have been successfully implemented in E.L.T. through (a) student-centred syllabus, (b) teacher centred education (b) bottom-up innovative approaches. The following results were achieved:

- In terms of aims and objectives new ones which are in tune with recent pedagogical developments in E.L.T. have been set;

- In terms of content, new directions which too are in line with the objectives and the learners' needs have been taken. This has led to the re-designing of the syllabus and the designing of a series of 4 student textbooks (entitled English for the Sahel) and 4 teacher's guides.

- In terms of teacher education, the innovations implemented in E.L.T. have

led to (i) overcoming the acute shortage of English teachers, (ii) training a sufficient number of qualified E.L.T. Advisers – an endeavour which facilitates the success I.N.S.E.T. sessions.

- In terms of evaluation, English B.E.P.C. exam has undergone changes that would make it in tune with the objectives and the content; finally, the syllabus, the textbooks were piloted before being adopted.

After having presented the rationale of the thesis, the educational context it deals with, and the place of English within that context, the research methodology developed is looked at in chapter four. In order to carry out the study, methodological triangulation and investigator triangulation (Cohen and Manion 1989:269-286) were employed to questionnaire 1788 students and 133 teachers fill in questionnaires, and to interview 14 respondents who included Ministry officials, school principals and Parents' Association members. In addition, classroom observations and archival records were used to cross-check the findings.

The analysis and interpretation of the data are incapsulated in chapter 5. For the sake of clarity, findings will be dealt with in terms of the major education problematic areas under investigation, i.e the curriculum, the financing of education, and the organisation of the Ministry.

- **Findings Relating to the Curriculum**

The first area investigated dealt with the students' perceptions and attitudes towards school. The analysis showed that contrary to what people believe, the vast majority of students like school, for it has been profoundly ingrained in their minds that school is the sole path to success and that it guarantees a job. Students, according to their sex (male or female) or the nature of their school (private or

state) locality (rural or urban), the level of education (first cycle, second cycle) or regions (Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) do not accord the same importance to the issue. Thus, female students in general like school more than male students, private school students more than those in state schools, students from rural areas more than students living in urban areas, first cycle students more than second cycle students, and students from Region 1 more than those in any of the remaining parts of the country, and those of Region 5 liking school less than those in the 4 other parts of the country. It should be added that this liking of school that students showed translated itself into the desire of the majority of them to pursue their studies at the University.

Finally, the majority of the students agree to have some parental encouragement while the vast majority of school administrators and teachers complain about the lack of interest that parents show in their children's schooling.

As regards the curriculum *per se*, the majority of the students value highly their teachers and their teaching materials – an evaluation that Ministry officials and school administrators do not completely share. In terms of subject liking, Mathematics is ranked 1st, French 2nd, English 3rd and Geography 9th. Students first term average aggregates showed that they perform better in English than in Mathematics and French. Another important finding that emerged from the analysis is again in connection with students' attitudes towards Mathematics, Sciences and Languages (French and English). In effect, male students have shown more positive attitudes towards Mathematics and Sciences than female students. Conversely, female students seem in general to enjoy languages more than male students.

The analysis of the data relating to English (Language Teaching) revealed the

following findings:

1. The vast majority of students do like English; however, female students tend to enjoy it more than male students. This liking of English also varies according to locality (urban/rural), nature of schools(private/state) and Regions. Thus, urban students show a more positive attitude towards English than those located in rural areas; those in private school more than students in state schools, and students of Region 2 more than those in the remaining 4 regions. Furthermore, this liking of English is translated into the determination of the majority of the students to succeed in English. Finally, the results also showed that teachers (irrespective of their subjects), school administrators and decision-makers, all have very positive views about English.

2. The results have also shown that for most of the students, their motivational orientation is rather instrumental than integrative. They are learning English with the view to communicating and obtaining a well-paid job in the future.

3. The vast majority of the students and all the teachers and interviwees are well aware of the importance of English and the place it occupies in the world. It is noteworthy that there exist an important number of students who think that today, English is as important as French in Niger – a view that is not shared by the vast majority of the teachers and other educationists.

4. A certain number of results confirmed the hypothesis of the study, that *English is a dynamic and successful subject on account of the innovations it has undergone.* E.L.T. Advisers and teachers are very active in implementing innovative changes as the teacher questionnaire, the interviews, and the archival records showed and pupils' achievements in the subject are indeed satisfactory. These innovations, whose fruits were referred to in chapters three and six are

based on teacher centred innovation, pupil centred learning and bottom-up approaches, with of course the Ministry intervening in the institutionalization of their outcomes.

Now, what are then the implications of these findings?

First of all, it should be noted that the fact that students in general have shown positive attitudes towards school is in itself very comforting: (i) parents and even some educators should stop blaming students for their failure and rather question other factors than students' lack of interest in schooling; (ii) the system should be questioned to find out the causes which give rise to falling standards (iii) pedagogically, this finding is all the more important for it urges the teacher to question his/her methods and his/her rapport with students (iv) the objectives of education ought to be redefined as soon as possible for each student who graduates would expect the state to provide him/her with a job – which is quite impossible.

That students from rural areas and girls showed very positive attitudes towards school is a good sign which indeed needs to be encouraged. This may lead to bridging the literacy rate gap which exists, on the one hand, between urban areas and rural areas, and men and women, on the other. However, the reasons conducive to urban students' falling interest for school merit attention on the part of the policy-makers – for in cities, it is common knowledge that between dislike of school, truancy and the like, and juvenile delinquency, the border is very slim. Students from Region 5 showed less positive attitudes towards school than those in any other four regions. Again, the Ministry and the community of the region should look into the matter by building schools which are not far from students' residences.

The implications of male students' positive attitudes and female students'

negative attitudes towards Mathematics and Science are twofold: (i) they will increase the inequality of entry in the labour market or (ii) as noted by Ehrhart and Sandler (1987:5) (cited in Rogers, 1990:38) they 'can have a profound negative impact on women's academic and career development'. Such findings obviously beg two pedagogical questions which require further research:

i Do teaching styles/methods contribute in obtaining such results?

ii If so, then what should be done to provide equal opportunities for both male and female students?

As for the results revealing that students' liking of English varies according to sex, nature of school and region, the implication is a pedagogical one. E.L.T. advisers as well as researchers and teachers in state schools or region 3 should look into that matter and find the necessary solutions.

Before proceeding to the finding relating to the financing of education, a word must be said about the innovations implemented in English. Firstly, English is regarded as an important component of the curriculum which has experienced more successful innovations than any other subject. And as such it can contribute to enhance the system in general and the curriculum in particular. The following strategies employed in E.L.T. are not only applicable at the level of any subject but also, to some extent, at the level the central administration:

1. General and specific aims and objectives should be clearly stated; they should also be reasonable;

2. Syllabus and textbook design should be in tune with students' needs;

3. The training of trainers should be given priority;

4. Teachers and advisers should develop research-action from which will stem innovative changes;

5. Innovations should be based on (i) sideway interactions (teachers amongst themselves first, then with E.L.T. advisers), (ii) bottom-up, (iii) top-down approaches;

6. Evaluation should follow any educational enterprise.

- **Findings Relating to The Financing of Education**

The results have also revealed that the limited resources of the Ministry are viewed as the second most serious problem to be overcome. The implication of these financial difficulties are indeed obvious:

1. In the long run (or maybe even in the short run) the state will not be in the position to educate all the children who are the age of attending school – which would have very serious consequences on the socio-politico-economic development of the country;

2. Lack of sufficient teaching materials;

3. Overcrowded classrooms;

4. Students and teachers alike will not be placed in acceptable conditions of work – which would tremendously affect the system's output.

It is indeed fortunate that today, this problem is perceived by most of the people concerned who suggest that 'sacrifice' should be conceded by all, if education is to prosper in Niger.

- **Findings Relating to the Organization of the Ministry**

All the findings pertaining to this area came from archival records which were mostly used in chapter 2.

Firstly, the fact that there does not exist a ratified document encapsulating all the national education policies is in itself a serious handicap: (i) people may at times take decisions whose aims are blurred; (ii) many people ignore their educational rights and obligations.

Secondly, the lack of information circulation which gives rise to the lack of cohesion in the Ministry's endeavours;

Thirdly, the highly centralized nature of the system which slows down all educational enterprises.

All three setbacks referred to impede the normal development of the system. One way of addressing these problems might be an efficiency study of the Ministry; another way might be more radical in the sense of decentralization – point which will be taken later on reflecting the possible organization of the Ministry (section 6.3.5).

6.3 Further Reflexions on the Future of Education in Niger

Having discussed the implications and recommendations arising directly out of the findings, we now wish to reflect upon other issues which stem indirectly from the thesis.

6.3.1 Role of Research in Niger

The lessons drawn from conducting the present study concern: firstly I.N.D.R.A.P., the National Institute for Educational Research, and the Ministry, and secondly the attitudes of people towards the research and educational research in particular.

Research of any nature, let alone educational research which aims at explaining 'more fully the complexity of situations in which human beings interact' should be handled with more care and seriousness. I.N.D.R.A.P. which is supposed to the 'brain' of the system has for a long time been considered as (i) an office where *non grata* teachers, advisers and inspectors were posted; (ii) then the trend changed with the establishment of research allowance, and of course I.N.D.R.A.P. became coveted – which means that many so called researchers are there just because of the reseach allowance. In such circumstances the objectives set by the National Institute of Educational Research would hardly be achieved.

Another reality is that the personnel is not fully prepared to undertake educational research, the majority not having a background in qualitative or quantitative research. In brief, research in I.N.D.R.A.P. should be undertaken by people not only interested in the field but above all by people trained to use the various educational methods and kept abreast of educational developments.

Furthermore, the educational problems of the country would be better investigated if all policy-makers, school administrators and teachers were provided with a background in research methods, a view shared by Vulliamy *et al.* (1990:25)

> If the potential of ... educational research is to be fully realized in developing countries, there need to be mechanisms for the widespread dissemination of such research both to policy-makers and to members of the academic community.

The study has also revealed how much people were interested in educational

research. Unexpectedly, they showed a genuine interest in the present study, some even criticizing the Ministry for not having undertaken such a study long ago. People thus, seem ready to help and curve the country's educational problems.

6.3.2 Future Research Needs

The present work has brought to the surface the major problems impeding the proper development of the educational system in general and that of secondary education in particular. It has also investigated and demonstrated how one of the components of the curriculum, *viz* English, is experiencing success – an experience that can be shared with other subjects. Hence a study of this nature has first of all is to be made known to the policy-makers, the National Institute of Educational Research, the school administrators, the teachers' union and of course the students. Such an audience may be reached in various ways, depending on whether one is dealing with a group of people or institutes or schools.

The research has led to very interesting results, certain topics needing further investigation so as to be comprehended. Amongst these are the following:

- Gender differences in Mathematics and the associated pedagogical implications;
- Gender differences in languages (French, English) and the associated pedagogical implications. There is a need to extend the investigation to experimental schools where national languages are the media of instruction.
- Nigérien perceptions and attitudes towards Americans, British, African anglophones: Are these perceptions and attitudes the same?
- The financing of education in a newly democratic society: the case of Niger.

6.3.3 Further Reflexions on the Curriculum Issues

Prerequisite

The philosophy of the Nigérien education, if the latter is to survive and thrive for the best, should rest on the *tryptic*

(1) A sacrifice on the part of all concerned, i.e the whole nation;

(2) The full democratisation of education to provide equal opportunity for all irrespective of (i) social status or creed, (ii) sex, (iii) regions, or (iv) religion;

(3) The promotion of national languages within the curriculum.

All these obviously cannot be achieved if the structure of educational system does not undergo a thorough reform which, as put by Fägerlind and Saha (1989:145) would mean

> a fundamental alteration in national policies, causing in turn major changes in some or all of the following: (1) the national allocation of resources to the field of education; (2) the allocation of resources within the existing educational system to other levels of the system; (3) the percentage of students from different social strata or the percentage of female students that complete different levels of the educational system; (4) the aims of the curricula and their content.

All national seminars in connection with the Nigérien education system have stressed the necessity to implement innovations at all levels, and at the level of the curriculum in particular. It has already been revealed in earlier chapters that the system experiences a high rate of waste (i.e drop-outs rate and rates of repetitions) for which urgent measures ought to be taken, if all Nigérien pupils are to benefit from education and thus guarantee a better future for the country.

It has also been revealed that most of the syllabi and teaching materials are inadequate, not to mention the student assessment which, in most cases, needs to be reviewed. Finally, in the light of the curriculum mishaps discussed in the pre-

ceding chapters, only short-term solutions could help ease the academic problems the Ministry is facing.

6.3.3.1 Aims and Objectives

The general aims and objectives of education in Niger ought to be redefined by taking into account the current politico-socio-economic realities of the country. Schooling should thus aim at training students to become responsible citizens, capable of not only fitting in their society but also of developing their country. Furthermore, there still exist subjects, such as French or *Activités Pratiques et Productives* (A.P.P.) whose aims and objectives ought to be reviewed. As regards the first subject, reference has already made to it as being taught as a first or second language, while it is neither. For the second, though it is seen as beneficial to the students – students learn how to grow vegetables, how to breed chickens and the like – it remains a subject on which students are not assessed. Hence, for the sake of having a well balanced curriculum the aims of such subjects need to be reconsidered.

6.3.3.2 Content

Syllabi should be redesigned or amended so as to reach the aims and objectives of the system. They should as is the case in E.L.T. reflect students' needs and realities. The syllabus content should enable students not only to (i) gain knowledge but (ii) also discover themselves and the world surrounding them, and (iii) finally know how to use what they have learnt to improve their environment. This, leads us to the pedagogy necessary to achieve the aforementioned aims.

6.3.3.3 Pedagogy

Before discussing the pedagogical recommendations *per se* a word must be said on the teacher-training institutions in Niger. As previously mentioned (Cf chap:2) three faculties (those of Pedagogy, Letters and Science) currently train secondary school teachers – an educational policy which is viewed by many educationists as a waste of energy and financial means. This said, it should be pointed out that it is common knowledge that teacher-training is undertaken by schools of education, and Niger should not be an exception. If initial training is to be carried out efficiently all endeavours should be deployed on one higher education institution, the Faculty of Pedagogy, or preferably the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* as many Nigérien educationists have suggested (Moumouni 1989).

With respect to teacher education, all in-service training sessions should be centred on the teacher who ought to have his/her say in the pedagogical issues to be tackled during these gatherings. Again, as is the case in E.L.T., such organisation of in-service training sessions may yield innovative changes based on (i) bottom-up (ii) top-down approaches and (iii) sideways interactions between parties.

It has been noticed that in many cases classroom inspections put teachers in uncomfortable situations. Thus, as suggested by Griffin (1992:90), inspections procedures should be clearly defined and documented in order

- to help ensure a high degree of consistency in the way that inspections are carried out, and in the writing of reports;
- to increase the capacity of inspections to produce the required information;
- to inform educational establishmentss what to expect during an inspection;
- to facilitate systematic review and evaluation in inspection procedures.

Furthermore, the *Direction de l'Enseignement Secondaire et Technique* (D.E.S.T.) should offer more opportunities to the best teachers to become part of the advisory team and the best advisers, part of the inspection team.

Similarly, as it was shown in E.L.T. (*vide supra*:Chap3) the learning process in all components of the curriculum should be centred on the pupils. Thus, students should not be viewed or treated as "depositories", "adjustable, manageable beings to be dominated" (Freire, 1975:139). This view of teaching and learning (observed by many subject teachers) that Freire calls the 'banking concept of education' encapsulates the following views and attitudes that teachers have to avoid:

1. The teacher teaches and the students are taught;
2. The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;
3. The teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
4. The teacher talks and students listen – meekly;
5. The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
6. The teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply;
7. The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
8. The teacher chooses the programme content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it;
9. The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in oppposition to the freedom of the students;
10. The teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere

objects (Freire, 1975:139).

6.3.3.4 Evaluation

Needless to say all educational undertakings ought to be evaluated, which is not the case for many aspects of the system: (i) in many cases innovations are implemented, developed, but unfortunately 'die' without being evaluated; (ii) most books are used in schools without being piloted. (iii) most in-service seminars are held without being evaluated at their final stage, and more serious, the students' assessment in many subjects are not adequate. Thus, the D.E.S.T. should take all measures leading to the evaluation of all education endeavours.

6.3.4 Reflexions On Financing Education

There exist studies which suggest that 'educational systems are comparatively independent of economic, political and cultural/ideological forces', view that Simmons (1980) (cited in Fägerlind and Saha, 1989:148) thus supports:

> if the educational system of a country should be changed, it is more a matter of technicalities which determines whether the reform wil be successful or not. Efficient and well-trained teachers, good school-buildings, new curricula and different kinds of technical equipment are the important prerequisites neede for a successful reform.

In developing countries in general and in Niger in particular, such a view cannot hold for as Fägerlind and Saha contend, 'the educational system is dependent upon, but also influences, the economic, political and cultural ideological dimensions of the society'. Even if a country fulfills the above mentioned technicalities, it needs at a mininum the proper handling of its national resources. Most Third World countries, and Niger is no exception, are undermined by what is known as *primitive accumulation* (PA) which is defined by Emoungu (1992:201) as 'the privatisation of national capital in a developing nation by its political and bureau-

cratic elite'. This expropriation of the nation's wealth by a minority of individuals obviously heightens the gap between the elite and the masses – today a source of social unrest in Niger. Before suggesting any measures regarding the financing of education a *sine qua non* prerequisite to easing the state's financial problems would be

(1) The dismantling of, or at least in the short-term the minimizing of corruption and primitive accumulation;

(2) The proper planning of nation's undertakings and the proper handling of its resources which should be only exercised by experienced and upright economists, accountants and planners.

As regards the financing of education, it is perhaps fortunate that all the parties concerned have come to the conclusion that the state cannot afford to continue providing a completely free education – all being witnesses of the repercussions of the economic recession on the state cashboxes. What may not be found a common ground of agreement is the way each citizen should contribute to education – given the unequal distribution of wealth. However, since *sacrifice* is one of the foundations leading to the fruitful reform of the country, the following suggestions may be advanced:

- Short-Term Suggestions

(1) As suggested by the national conferences on education held in Zinder in 1979 and 1982 (M.E.N./C.N./ Unesco, 1990:9) a National Education Fund should be created. It is to be supported by the following financial sources: (i) taxes collected on luxury goods; (ii) primary and secondary school fees to be paid by parents in urban areas; (iii) twinning Nigérien schools and other schools

abroad; (iv) institutionalization of *Activités Pratiques et Productives* (A.P.P.) and creation of school co-operatives wherever possible; (v) institutionalization of a given day as the national day for education with the view to organizing activities that would bring money to the National Fund of Education.

(2) Financial autonomy should be devolved to regions (Regional Educational Departments and Regional Educational Board).

(3) It is the view of the present author that, parents, irrespective of their revenues, should participate in the financing of education, for the democratic (educational) ideals should prevail at all times.

6.3.5 Reflections on the Organization of the Ministry

For a long time a dychotomous view of education was taken by policy-makers whereby primary and secondary education on the one hand, and higher education on the other, constituted two distinctive forms of education. This conception has led (until recently) the leaders of the country to cater for two Ministries, one in charge of education known as the Ministry of Education, and the other as Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Technology – as though the two were mutually exclusive. The combination of the three levels of the system under the supervision of one Ministry would present more advantages than having two separate Ministries. First of all, the follow-up of the various educational undertakings from kindergarten to university would not only be made easier but would also lend itself to more positive results. Secondly, a single Ministry for education, would put less financial weight on the state.

Another most important point is related to the capability of the state to provide education to all its children, as this duty is incumbant on it. Owing to

the demographic increase – which is greater than the economic development of the country – rigourous educational planning ought to be undertaken, for as Husén (1979:72) (quoted in Fägerling and Saha, 1989:267) cautions

> The tensions and strains of educational expansion can impede and place obstacles to economic, social and political development. To take the most simple example, the accelerating costs of expanding educational systems compete with other sectors of the respective societies for finite resources. As mass primary education is attained, expansion shifts to the second and tertiary levels as these too are gradually transformed into mass systems. At the same time, the increase in costs is not arithmetic but geometric.

It is in the interest of the educational system as well as that of the entire nation to accord a *place de choix* to educational planning. School administrators, Ministry officials irrespective of their posts ought to have an acceptable background of planning and management – two keys to 'healthier education' development

Other parameters to be taken into account are: (a) the change of mentalities resulting from the democratization of the country, (b) new objectives for education (it is the responsibility of all states to educate their children, but no country on the face of earth would 'brag' of being able to provide a job to every student at the end of his/her studies).

In chapter two mention has been made of the lack of a ratified document on national education policy, a problem that does not exist in the case of Senegal, Nigeria and Togo. The non-existence of such an important document makes the set educational objectives blurred, the whole organization of educational endeavours ill-defined and the goals unreachable. Some national seminars, meetings of Nigérien educationists, and of course the National Conference have produced useful final reports however and these can serve as basis for the design of the national education policy. As a reminder, the following final reports may be noted:

1. *Grandes orientations de la réforme de l' enseignement (mars 1974)*;

2. *Réunion de la Commission pour la Réforme de l' enseignement et le plan de scolarisation (mai 1976)*;

3. *Séminaire général sur l' éducation (avril 1976)*;

4. *Débat national sur l' école nigérienne (mars 1982)*;

5. *Commission de réflexion sur la formation des formateurs pour les enseignements des premier et second degrés (mars 1986)*;

6. *Conférence Nationale (juillet-novembre 1991).*

It has already been explained that the highly centralized system of the Ministry hampers in many ways the normal development of education. The administrative machinery is very slow, and a matter which could be solved within hours may take weeks if not months just because the Ministry retains most if not all of the powers. As put by Blakers (1982) quoted in Chapman and Dustan (1990:194)

> **the centralization of education, with time and size, inevitably produced rigidity of thinking, adherence to established practices and resistance to change ... discouraged community involvement ... encouraged a defensiveness and a fear to challenge within schools and departments.**

This is a serious handicap for which the following suggestions may be advanced to minimize it:

- Short-Term Suggestions:

The new political and social climate which prevails in Niger requires a new form of framework whereby decentralization and participative democracy allow people to develop local educational undertakings. As already explained in the introductory chapter, education is the business of the entire nation and as such everybody should have a say. Indeed, responsibility should be devolved to each of the 8 regions. Hence, within each of the 8 existing administrative entities, there

should be created:

(1) A Regional Education Department (R.E.D.) to cater for: (i) nursery schools, (ii) primary schools, (iii) secondary schools, (iv) adult education centres. The existing distinction between primary inspectorates and secondary inspectorates should be abolished for, instead of being complementary they tend to appear as two rival institutions. Thus, Regional Educational Departments should apply the following strategies advocated by the Audit Commission (1989) (quoted in Ranson, 1992:15), in order to succeed:

- they should all include clear statements of educational objectives;
- they should provide support for schools and colleges which allows them to progress towards an agreed level of autonomy;
- their approaches to budget setting and resource allocation should be founded on an assessment of the needs of the ultimate client relationship;
- they should incorporate monitoring information systems which are robust, useful and user friendly.

(2) A Regional Education Head (R.E.H.)to be helped by infant school, primary and secondary inspectors.

(3) A Regional Educational Board (R.E.B.) made of elected members representing the various organizations of the areas. All regional educational matters would be dealt with by the R.E.D. and the R.E.B., to which the Ministry will devolve power. It should be noted that such a suggestion is not entirely new to the Ministry, which had always postponed the creation of *Directions Régionales* for unavowed reasons. What is new to the idea is the democratic dimension given this proposal.

(4) Sufficient funds and qualified personel to allow the R.E.D.s to carry out their task efficiently. The Regional Director, a key figure in the decentralization process, ought also to be appointed on solid grounds, beyond all 'irrational' considerations. His/her role would be similar to that of the new LEAs defined by Ranson (1992:15):

(a) a **leader**, articulating a vision of what the education service is trying to achieve;

(b) a **partner**, supporting schools and colleges and helping them to fulfil this vision;

(c) a **planner**, of facilities for the future;

(d) a **provider of information**, to the education system, helping people to make informed choices;

(e) a **regulator**, of quality in schools and colleges;

(f) a **banker**, channeling the funds which enable local institutions to deliver.

- Mid-Term Suggestions

(1) Once the Regional Educational Departments have been set up it is imperative to create in each of them a section which would cater for the follow up of innovations and their evaluation.

- Long-Term Suggestions

(1) The creation of another University and branches of I.N.D.R.A.P. would complete the decentralization process;

(2) The creation of secondary inspections in all localities where there are at

least two C.E.G.s.

This thesis ends with Edward de Bono's metaphor (1967), quoted in Rogers (1982:151), which with some readjustment, is very applicable to the educational system in Niger and its policy-makers, planners and pedagogs:

> It is not possible to dig a hole in a different place by digging the same hole deeper ... If the hole is in the wrong place, then no amount of improvement is going to put it in the right place. No matter how obvious this may seem to every digger, it is still easier to go on digging in the same hole than to start all over again in a new place ... The disinclination to abandon a half-dug hole is partly a reluctance to abandon the investment of effort that has gone into the hole without seeing some return. It is also easier to go on doing the same thing rather than wonder what else to do: there is strong practical commitment to it ... Yet great new ideas and great scientific advances have often come about through people ignoring the hole that is in progress and starting a new one ...

In other words,

> [policy-making, planning, pedagogy] 'experts' should consider climbing out of their current [education] holes and should start looking for sites for more useful, more productive holes, even though experts are not usually the first to leap out of the hole that accords them their expert status, to start digging elsewhere (Edward de Bono, *ibid.*).

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